

Shoebill Population Monitoring and Habitat Assessment in Ekyizimbi Swamp, Kiruhura District

As part of our ongoing commitment to conserving Uganda's threatened bird species and their habitats, the **Avian Conservation Uganda Society (ACUS)** spent the weekend of 8th March, 2025 in **Ekyizimbi Swamp**, located in Rwekyishwaga village, **Kiruhura District**. This important wetland, though lesser known, holds significant ecological value, serving as a habitat for a variety of wetland bird species, including the iconic and vulnerable **Shoebill Stork (Balaeniceps rex)**.

Survey Findings

During our **Shoebill Population Monitoring and Habitat Assessment**, our team recorded **four individual Shoebills**—two mature females, one mature male, and one juvenile male. These observations confirm that Ekyizimbi Swamp remains a critical refuge for this elusive and globally vulnerable species.

However, our team also noted several human-induced threats to the swamp ecosystem. The increasing levels of **fishing activity** and **livestock grazing** within and around the swamp present imminent risks to Shoebill nesting and foraging grounds. These disturbances highlight the urgent need for proactive conservation interventions to safeguard both the Shoebills and the wider biodiversity of the wetland.

Community Engagement and Conservation Action

A unique and inspiring component of this field activity was our collaboration with the **Lake Mbuoro Community Tourism Project**, whose young and enthusiastic guides led us through the swamp during the survey. These local champions are already playing a pivotal role in conserving Shoebill habitats around the **Ekyizimbi wetlands** by promoting **sustainable ecotourism** as an alternative livelihood.

During our visit, we held **interactive discussions** with the local community members of Rwekyishwaga village. These conversations emphasized the shared value of **wetland conservation**, not only for the survival of species like the Shoebill but also for the **ecosystem services** these wetlands provide to human communities. Together, we explored practical ways to strengthen community stewardship of Ekyizimbi Swamp.

As a result, we reached a consensus on key conservation actions moving forward:

- ✓ **Establish a community-led birding club**, empowering local residents to monitor and report bird species, including Shoebills.
- ✓ **Build the capacity of local guides and community members** in bird identification, data collection, and sustainable tourism practices.
- ✓ **Promote Ekyizimbi Swamp as a unique ecotourism destination**, offering birding experiences focused on the Shoebill and other wetland species.

✓ **Launch a comprehensive community sensitization campaign** to raise awareness about the importance of wetland conservation and minimize human-induced threats.

Alignment with Our Mission

This activity directly aligns with **ACUS's mission to conserve Uganda's avian diversity and their habitats** through **research, community engagement, education, and advocacy**. By supporting **community-based conservation initiatives** and promoting **sustainable livelihoods**, we aim to create lasting solutions that benefit both birds and people.

Our work in Ekyizimbi Swamp reinforces our belief that **conservation is most effective when local communities are at the center**; empowered, informed, and actively participating in safeguarding their natural heritage.

We are grateful to the Rwekyishwaga community, the Lake Mburo Community Tourism Project, and all partners who made this activity possible. Together, we can protect Uganda's wetlands and ensure a future for the Shoebill and countless other species that depend on these vital ecosystems.

☞ **Join Us!** If you'd like to support or collaborate with ACUS in future conservation activities, feel free to [contact us](#).

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