

RUN FOR BIRDS: AVIAN CONSERVATION UGANDA LEADS AFRICA'S FIRST BIRD CONSERVATION RUN

On 19th October 2025 marked a historic milestone for bird conservation in Africa as Avian Conservation Uganda (ACUS) successfully pioneered the continent's first-ever "Run for Birds" event. The 6-kilometer awareness run, held around the scenic Sheraton Hotel on Nakasero Hill, Kampala, brought together over 200 participants united under one theme, "every step saves a species," to protect Uganda's unique birdlife and promote sustainable coexistence between people and nature.

Avian Conservation Uganda is a non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding Uganda's avian diversity through research, community education, habitat restoration, and rescue of injured or trafficked birds. Since 2022, the organization has been instrumental in promoting sustainable conservation practices across the country, working closely with local communities, policymakers, and conservation partners to protect threatened bird species and their habitats.



Participants pause for a photo with Mr. Jean Philleppe who flagged off the run

Uganda is often referred to as the “Pearl of Africa,” and rightly so, as it boasts over 1,090 bird species, representing nearly half of all bird species found in Africa and about 11% of the world’s total bird population. This makes the country a paradise for bird watchers and a leading birding destination nationally, estimated to generate approximately Shs2 trillion (\$700 million) annually through tourism and nature-based experiences.

Despite this richness, Uganda’s birds face growing threats. Habitat loss due to deforestation, agricultural expansion, and poisoning has led to alarming declines in populations. The Grey Crowned Crane, commonly known as the crested crane, is Uganda’s national emblem and a symbol of grace but has suffered drastic decrease from over 100,000 species in the 1950s to fewer than 10,000 today, according to BBC reports 2025

As part of our awareness programs, the run for Birds was conceived as a creative and engaging way to raise public awareness about these challenges and rally action for conservation. The main event in Kampala was complemented by satellite runs in Kisoro and Kibale, both recognized as important bird areas.



The participants doing warmups before the run

The day began with energetic warm-up exercises led by a professional fitness coach, followed by the scenic 6km run through Nakasero. Along the route, eco-friendly water refill stations were set up to minimize plastic waste; runners used reusable water bottles provided in their kits. After the run, participants enjoyed birdwatching sessions, interactive conservation talks, and networking moments that inspired youth and new members to take part in future conservation activities.



The participants having a fun time during the run

Tumwesgye Erasmus the Executive director Avian Conservation Uganda, emphasized that the event symbolizes a growing movement:

“Birds are more than just beautiful creatures; they are vital to our ecosystems. They disperse seeds that regenerate forests, pollinate plants, and maintain the balance of nature. Protecting them means protecting our future.”

Avian Conservation Uganda extended heartfelt appreciation to the partners who made the event possible, including Sheraton Hotel who provided the free venue and food for all the participants, Ruby Hospital, which provided an ambulance and medical support; Yujo Izakayo Restaurant, which offered refreshments and juice for the runners; and Jibu Water, which donated 200 liters of clean drinking water, UCTV, which provided coverage of the event and live pre-run programs to promote the event. We also thank other sponsors who supported us through buying kits and participation to have this day successful

The success of the Run for Birds sets a new precedent for creative conservation engagement in Uganda and Africa at large. Plans are already underway to make it an annual event, expanding participation to schools, corporate institutions, and community groups across the country.

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