



A.P. LEVENTIS ORNITHOLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE,
UNIVERSITY OF JOS, NIGERIA

APLORI

WEST AFRICA'S FOREMOST ORNITHOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE

Newsletter

VOLUME 9 | MARCH, 2025

• **A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute,**
Centre of Excellence Restates commitment to
Conservation Research

• **Dr. Pantong**

Bird watching is one of the fastest-growing hobbies globally, and people should jump in as early as they can to enjoy its numerous benefits.

• **Dr. Anastasios Paul Leventis (CBE, OFR)**
Passion Captured

• **Plant Propagation,**
Contribution to Climate
Smart Approach.





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FRONT COVER: Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus*
(Dr. Pantong Davwar)

Director's Desk

I am glad to have been part of APLORI's journey from inception as a member of the second MSc Conservation Biology cohort admitted by the Institute. I have seen the Institute grow in leaps and bounds with the icing on our cake occurring at the end of year 2024 when we marked our belated 20th anniversary. In the same year, the Institute was also designated as a Centre of Excellence. This is wonderful, as our new designation is a recognition of the vision of our Founder and Benefactor Dr. Anastasios Paul Leventis. I should add that the sacrifices and advice of our Board Members represented by the Board Chairman, Sir Phillip Hall and the contributions of our former Directors, the Laminga Community, numerous Lecturers and partners within and outside Nigeria from inception to date have enabled our astronomic rise and development over the years.

Our new designation places a major burden on our shoulders and that is, to be **HIGHLY EXCEPTIONAL** at what we do going forward. I will be counting on the support of all staff and well wishers of the Institute to ensure that we live up to these expectations. We hope to, in the near future, handover an excellent institution.

We have begun this journey with this edition of the Newsletter which marks our beginning as a Centre of Excellence. We hope that subsequent editions that would follow will continue to tell excellent stories about our Centre.

I would therefore use this opportunity to appreciate the Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos, Prof. Ishaya Tanko, all Management Staff of the University, the distinguished Senate of the University of Jos, the Dean of the School of Postgraduate studies and the Head of Department Zoology for their efforts in ensuring that APLORI is appropriately recognized and valued. We thank them also for the support we have continued to receive towards realising our objectives.

Dr. Adams Chaskda

*Director, A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute,
Centre of Excellence.*



Editor's Note

It's with great pleasure that we offer you the APLORI's first quarter 2025 Newsletter. This volume covered activities during the visit of our Benefactor, articles on conservation issues, interviews, APLORI alumni and citizen scientists' perspectives and research reports.

Some of these columns will henceforth be a regular feature of our quarterly report in addition to providing you an up-to-date details of activities at the Centre.

The editorial team will be glad to receive feedback from our audience. Kindly make use of the contact details provided on the previous page.

Have a delightful reading experience.

Nanlep Kumle

Senior Communications Officer,
A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence.

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A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence Unveiled



The unveiling of the newly constructed A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence, University of Jos, Signpost was beautifully launched by the Institute's sole benefactor, Anastasios Paul Leventis, together with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ishaya Tanko. Also joining hands in the unveiling were the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academics, Professor Rahila Gowon and the traditional leader of the community where the great institute is sited, Adagwom Musa Arin who is the Acting Village Head of Laminga.



This recognition is a result of the many years of achievement the institute has recorded in building capacity in the field of conservation and biological research for not just Nigeria as a country but the world at large.

As the first of its kind in West Africa, the ornithological research institute with this recent upgrade is open to more capacity trainings as more Ph.D. researchers would be admitted. This, the institute's Board Chairman, Philip Hall, stated during a visit to the Centre as one of the task it has taken up gladly.



The visit by the team also presented an opportunity for a tour round the Molecular Ecology Lab, AP-MEL the first of its kind in West Africa.

Taking the team round the facility, Dr. Jecinta Abalaka, a senior researcher and Okpanachi Iko-Ojo Monday both of whom are molecular technologist say the facility is critical to the study of the ecosystem. The AP-MEL has the capacity to not just train but equally carryout researches from across west Africa since it is open to impact knowledge.



One commendable project completed at the APLORI Centre of Excellence under the leadership of the Director, Dr. Adams Chaskda, is the renovation of the student's hostel which houses the institute's Corps members and students on industrial training.

For the Director, the dire need of a befitting shelter for the beneficiaries is crucial as it would not just address the need for comfort but will spur them to put in their best in their given assignments.



A.P. Leventis Restates Commitment To Building Capacity In Ornithology And Biodiversity Research



For the world to achieve set goals in addressing the devastating effects of climate change, institutions of learning must be seen working in tandem in the area of research and training of the needed manpower in conservatory biology.

This the sole benefactor of the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence, Jos, stated while on a courtesy visit to the Vice-Chancellor and Management of the University of Jos.

The philanthropist, Dr. Anastasios Paul Leventis, flanked by the Board Chairman of the institute, Philip Hall, the Executive Director Leventis foundation Nigeria, Dr. Hope Ovie, and a Team from the A.P. Leventis institute led by the Director, Dr. Adams Chaskda, were in the university to strengthen over twenty years of existing collaboration in manpower development in conservation.

Delighted that he is visiting after a while, Leventis emphasized the importance of having climate-smart researchers that will impact the field of conservation.

The founder noted that APLORI is exploring and will continue to do by sponsoring more research areas and offering scholarships to individuals across Africa who are desirous of change.

On his part, the Board Chairman, Sir Philip Hall, says the Centre has done remarkably well to be adjudged and so recognised by the University of Jos, as A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence.

The Vice Chancellor, University of Jos, Professor Ishaya Tanko, who was also elated, restated that the University will always leverage on the collaborative efforts of the research institute as well as other institutes of learning that have stood out in impacting the society positively and meaningfully.



He emphasized that the University is proud to associate with its graduates including those produced by A.P Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, saying they are made for the global stage.

Prof. Ishaya, while stressing the need for sustained partnerships across institutions, maintained that, with support and funding, critical areas that require growth and development would be impacted positively.



*A.P Leventis Ornithological
Research Institute graduates
are made for the global stage.*

Prof. Tanko

From Passion to Vision, the Philanthropist's Perspective



For a man who many know as a **philanthropist** and an **icon of hope**, Anastasios Paul Leventis' passion and love for nature spans across decades of funding and sponsorship of what he loves. The fact is that he is positive that knowledge gained through researches and exciting expository findings will add meaningfully to understanding the world we live in. His interaction with nature is one among many attributes that stands him out across the globe as his name resonates with so many that have been mentored directly or otherwise by this great personality of repute.

Dr. Anastasios Paul Leventis is a shining example and a passionate lover of nature – birds to be precise. He has, over the decades, gone beyond just engaging in birding activities and documenting through pictures and writing about novel findings to sustaining funding in ornithological researches through his brain child, one of such is the foremost A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of

Excellence, Laminga, Jos Plateau State. An institute which for over twenty years has birthed exceptional researchers and has rightly earned the bragging right as 'Centre of Excellence' from its affiliate supervising institution, University of Jos.

It is worthy of note that at 84 years of existence, Leventis' love for bird-watching in the AMURUM forest of Laminga, Jos East, Plateau State, remains ever green and could best be described as nothing but exceptional, an activity he engages in at any slightest opportunity he has. He recently visited his brain child, the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Institute, Centre of Excellence and, still, passion he personifies in birding and commitment to a vision he cherishes could only be described as phenomenal as some of the pictures testify.





Among many activities the icon of excellence engaged in during the visit was the early morning and evening birding which still resonates with the philanthropist per excellence. According to him; “the morning walks are successful as large number of birds were seen, some of them somewhat difficult to be seen (not so common), over 50-60 species were seen. I have also photographed a couple which I have never photographed before.”

Responding to the question whether the institute he founded is projecting the vision he had at inception, he affirmed satisfaction that the institute has over the years written its name in gold as it has continued to produce and graduate beautiful minds that are contributing to the body of knowledge and to the growing manpower in conservatory researches and researchers across the world.

He emphasised that “the visit to the institute is an eye opener, with the five years gap from my last visit, things have advanced a great deal since that time; in terms of recruitment processes both for staff and students.... The researchers are of good standings and when they finish from here, they have the potential to excel in good universities around the world in their chosen field,”

The philanthropist, while expressing satisfaction with the successes recorded so far, stressed that that he is happy funding the institute as according to him, “it's not a waste of money, it's a well setup organisation, we are getting a very good value for what we are investing, it is very satisfactory to see that.”

Dr. Leventis is delighted that the Ornithology research institute does not admit only Nigerian researchers but has been open to other African countries. Leventis stated, the foundation is setting up a model institution in Senegal, based on what is happening in APLORI, Centre of Excellence to cater for researchers and to offer the needed capacity building platforms and of course to expand the body of knowledge by contributing meaningfully to the knowledge the society needs to thrive.

The word of advice that came strongly from the philanthropist and conservationist extraordinaire is for the researchers to find a field of research that will best project their passion and drive. He however, hammered on maintaining good standards as a yardstick for excellence and for the researchers and staff to be open to know a bit of everything, not be single minded, but to embrace multi-disciplinary approaches to be above their peers and to contribute meaningfully to global discourse and development.



A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute Committed to Addressing the Dire need for Conservatory Practice Across the World: An Exclusive with Aplori's Board Chairman, Philip Hall



What Is the Vision for the Institute, Now That It Has Been Recognized As a 'Centre of Excellence?'

Now that APLORI is recognized as a center of excellence, it is obvious that it has to spread our wings even further and, in particular, it is a great privilege to be able to offer Ph.D. programs. In the first instance, more will be recruited to join the wonderful team already doing great things.

And for that reason our mandate is broadened, we will continue to spread our wings across West Africa . As such based on what is happening in APLORI, we are setting up a model in Senegal to cater for the needed manpower. We are happy that for the time being, APLORI is equally open to foreign students.

“Building capacity of individuals throughout Africa is our goal”

Why Do We Need More Professionals in the Field of Conservatory Biology?

Professionals impact specific messages as such there is still a long way to go in addressing the dire need of Nigeria and indeed the continent of Africa's need in consciously working towards recovering not just the land that has been degraded, but in restoring and in some instances protecting the species of birds that are gradually disappearing in an alarming trajectory.

Our Forests needs to be reclaimed and it is important to address climate crises. We need more professionals to be trained to proffer solutions in and around conservation, not just in birds but the entire conservatory study. Birds are used mostly because they serve as indicators of the state of the environment. Just by monitoring population and how they survived on a daily bases which is among other things the institute does, we can get a good indication of how the environment we live in is faring.



Is There a Particular Concern You Have As to Some of the Harmful Practices You've Seen around?

In the time that I have been here, over twenty years, we have recorded a decline in so many species. Probably the most distressing is the lack of Vultures now. In the 70's Vultures were common sites throughout the country, but particularly, throughout Northern Nigeria. Now, they are gone, maybe a few left on the Plateau, but that's it. This is one issue that needs to be addressed in a big way.

Many of the birds are preys. We've noticed a huge decline; maybe because of toxic chemicals used on some birds, so all big species have declined and cannot be compared to what it used to be in Nigeria. It's so sad that the National Bird of Nigeria which used to breed on the plateau and indeed the entire Chad Basin has disappeared. It's so sad, all these birds have different roles they play in our existence as humans and in keeping the environment we so much cherish safe for all.

How Can We All Be Ambassadors in Preserving Our Natural Habitat?

The earlier people realize that having birds coexist with humans and other living things is good, the better for us. For example, Vultures help in

cleaning our environment, other birds help in pollinating, Quelea birds are in our farms because we do not have deserts for them to perch. All species have roles they play.

At our own level, we've been able to train hundreds, but that number is still not enough, we will continue to train more that are willing to as much as add our voices through researches and advocacy . We are keen on getting citizen scientists who are enthusiasts to help address the problem we are bedeviled with.



Insight to APLORI'S Molecular Ecology Laboratory



APLORI Molecular Ecology Lab (AP-MEL) is the only molecular genetics laboratory in Nigeria, dedicated to ecological and population genetics research.

The lab is at the forefront of biodiversity conservation, genetic identification, evolutionary ecology, and disease ecology, utilizing molecular tools to address critical challenges in species conservation, host-parasite interactions, and environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring. Beyond its research contributions, the lab plays a crucial role in capacity building by training APLORI MSc students in molecular techniques. It has also developed strong affiliations with leading research institutions, including the West African Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases and the African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP).

Our current research work include;

- Genetic identification and conservation of species
- Molecular analysis of parasite-host interactions
- Evolutionary genetics and phylogeography
- Population genetics and gene flow

APLORI Molecular Ecology Lab (AP-MEL) is open to all researchers and students across Nigeria and beyond to carry out molecular research. Presently, the lab can run the following analysis for you at a fee:

1. DNA extraction from various sample types, including blood samples, tissue samples, faecal samples and samples from plant parts
2. Polymerase Chain Reaction
3. Gel Electrophoresis
4. Microscopy
5. Soon...Sanga sequencing

While we can run your analysis for you, the lab can also allow you to participate in the different stages of the analysis of your own samples, so that you gain experience of the processes.

One of AP-MEL's purpose is capacity building, first, of the APLORI M.Sc Students, but also offers opportunity to anyone interested in learning molecular lab techniques.

The lab has established international research collaborations, including institutions in Sweden and the United States. These collaborations have facilitated joint research projects, knowledge exchange, and access to advanced molecular techniques, further enhancing the lab's capacity to conduct high-impact ecological and evolutionary research. The lab also welcomes collaboration opportunities on all forms of molecular genetic projects.

***Dr. Jecinta I. Abalaka /
Okpanachi Iko-Ojo Monday***

APLORI'S Masters Adjudged to be World Standard



Centre of Excellence. He emphasized that if institutions of learning could take a cue from what is obtainable at the APLORI, the country's needed manpower deficit would be a thing of the past. The external examiner, who came in from Linnaeus University, Sweden, was quick to point out that what most of the students have done over their period of research is of global standard as such he has no doubt that they can stand tall to compete with their peers.

The consensus opinion at the event was that research institute should be citadels that impact knowledge and excellence in their mandate of equipping the future generation.

The A.P Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence Master in Conservation Biology has for the past 23 years produced wonderful ambassadors who can stand tall on the global stage to contribute to the body of research and knowledge sharing in conservation studies.

Recently the 2023/2024 graduating cohort presented their research findings at thesis defence chaired by the Dean, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Jos, Professor Geoffrey Kumleng, in the presence of the External Examiner, Professor Jonas Waldenström of the Linnaeus University, Sweden. Also in attendance were host of Professors and Senior Lecturers of the University of Jos.



The Dean, who spoke with much optimism, declared that the students have proven to be worthy ambassadors of the University of Jos

The conservation ambassadors produced after the master degree programme include;

Antonio Benhildah, Dike Chukwuma, Ugome Othniel, Clement Bethel, Bello Sani Barnabas, Amos Samuel Jemimah, Damen Michael Tongkyen, Patrick Hassanatu, Nti Samuel, Ibrahim Ilyas

APLORI Champions Climate Smart Agriculture, Propagates Endangered Plant Species



This task could be likened to a shot that hits two targets in the sense that it meets its goal of preserving endangered species of plants while at the same time carrying out its corporate social responsibility to the locality. The institute has, over the years, trained residents and collaborated with institutions of learning in teaching the younger ones the beauty of preserving the ecosystem. On

A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Centre of Excellence, APLORI among many other things it's doing, is taking the forefront in the fight against climate Challenges by propagating endangered species of plants through erecting and managing a nursery that houses these endangered species which include, but not limited to, *Dombeya ledermanii*, *Pterocarpus erinaceous*, *Vitilleria paradoxa*, *Khaya senegalensis* and *Azelia Africana* within its facility.

several occasions, APLORI has donated plants that are ready for transplanting to individuals and schools with the hope that the recipients would equally be its ambassadors thereby championing the course of preserving the aforementioned species.



APLORI is also going the extra mile effectively building and managing Greenhouse Structures that serve as teaching facility for students and members of the community, all targeted towards



making a healthy ecosystem. The structures equally stand as a training ground that avails those trained to improve their skills in order to become self-reliant.

A Plant Scientist, Christopher Yohanna is the officer in charge of these laudable and commendable initiatives at APLORI, Centre of Excellence. While taking the sole benefactor of the institute, Dr. A.P. Leventis round the Nursery and the Greenhouse, he said the project was made possible under the leadership of the Centre's Director, Dr. Adams Chaskda with the intent of raising smart climate ambassadors at the same time creating revenue-generating channel for the Centre.

He added that the beauty of greenhouse farming is its benefit in reducing environmental pollution with agricultural chemicals which is important for the conservation potential of the Amumrum Forest Reserve, where the centre is based.

***A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research
Institute is Raising smart climate ambassadors
through greenhouse farming and the propagation
of plants to reclaim the land.
Christopher Yohanna***

Plants of Conservation Concern in APLORI Nursery

Christopher Yohanna

Pterocarpous ericaceous (Madrid or Rose Wood) *Khaya senegalensis* (Mahogany), *Vitilleria paradoxa* (shear butter), *Tamarindus indica* (Tamarind), *Adansonia digitata* (Baobab), *Dombeya ledermannii* (Dombeya) are of conservation concern they are threatened and endangered plants and they are vital for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health. Plants are the foundation of life on Earth, providing oxygen, food, and habitats for countless species, including humans.



However, many plant species are at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, climate change, pollution, and over-exploitation. Protecting these

the future benefits they may offer. Preserving plant diversity offers new opportunities for advancements in pharmaceuticals, food security, and sustainable development.



Conserving endangered plants also has cultural significance. Many plants hold traditional and spiritual value for indigenous communities around the world. The loss of these plants means the erosion of cultural heritage and knowledge that has been passed down through generations.

plants is not only an ecological responsibility but also a necessity for the well-being of our planet. One of the most important benefits of conserving endangered plants is their role in maintaining ecosystem balance. Plants are crucial for regulating the atmosphere, stabilizing soil, and supporting the food web. By safeguarding these species, we ensure the stability of ecosystems that provide essential natural gifts like clean air, water, and carbon sequestration.

Furthermore, many plants hold immense potential for medicine, agriculture, and industry. Numerous life-saving drugs have been derived from plants, and as we lose species, we risk losing

In conclusion, the conservation of threatened and endangered plants is essential for ecological balance, human well-being, and cultural preservation. Protecting these species not only safeguards biodiversity but also ensures that future generations can benefit from the vast



Nature Lover

The Aficionado Binoculars - An Exclusive with a Medical Doctor, Nature Lover and An Exceptional Photographer



My fascination with wildlife, both domestic animals and birds, began in my childhood. Birds, in particular, captivated me.

Dr. Pantong

Can we please meet the nature enthusiast who has kept many glued to his social media handles?

My name is Pantong Mark, and I'm a proud native of Plateau State, where I was born and raised. I'm passionate about this beautiful region, and I express that love through my photography, specializing in capturing the stunning landscapes and diverse birdlife that Plateau State has to offer. Beyond my artistic pursuits, I'm also a physician with a particular interest in liver diseases.

Your love for birding activity has been remarkable. Kindly share why you love doing it and how often you create time for birding.

My fascination with wildlife, both domestic animals and birds, began in my childhood. Birds, in particular, captivated me. Initially, this fascination led me down a less informed path, where I would hunt them to keep as pets. However, my perspective shifted dramatically after a visit to APOLORI and their bird watching club back in 2016. That single experience reignited my passion, but this time with knowledge and respect. Discovering the vast

global community of bird watchers was incredibly exciting. Now, bird watching is an essential part of any trip I take, anywhere in the world. I've been fortunate enough to observe and record just over 500 bird species since I started, but I know there are so many more out there to discover! *The simple answer to how I find time is: passion. I love bird watching, so I prioritize it. I dedicate a minimum of one session per week to formal birding, that precious "me time" with the birds. But honestly, birding is a daily experience for me. Even at work, my ears are attuned to the calls of birds. I might point out a Variable Sunbird to a colleague, sparking their curiosity and creating an opportunity to advocate for conservation.*

You don't have to dedicate hours to be a "twitcher." Even an hour in the evening can be enough, and it's a great way to get some exercise too.

I guess a number of people will say, "He's a doctor with no background in ornithology". What do you think your expression in birding and documenting what you've captured will add to the study of birds and the ecosystem?

Being a medical doctor, I believe, gives me a unique platform. The contrast between my profession and my passion for birding draws attention to what I do, allowing me to raise awareness in my own way.



Pantong

I can contribute to advocating for the environment, protecting birds, and preserving their habitats. People often tell me, "If he has time for this, then so can I," which is incredibly encouraging. My Facebook page is dedicated to sharing my birding experiences and raising awareness. I think my passion has already broken down some barriers and dispelled some of the ignorance surrounding this hobby and the field of ornithology as a whole.

Have you had to answer funny questions around why you are an enthusiast?

Oh, absolutely! I remember once posting a picture of a bird, and a friend of mine received a call asking, "Is that boy Pantong okay?" I get questions like that a lot, but by the time I finish explaining my passion, they're usually intrigued and want to join me on my next birding trip. They discover how much they didn't know about birds and their environment, and that's a wonderful thing.



For how long have you been birding, and do you see yourself retiring?

I'm really just at the beginning of my birding journey. My initial experience was in 2016, and my enthusiasm has only grown since then. For me, this is my retirement plan. I dream of having more time to travel the world, specifically to see rare and endemic birds, when I'm older and no longer working. I can't wait for that day! That's the grand plan, and I'm already making financial preparations for it. Ask me when I'm 60 how many birds I've seen!

Has birding for you introduced you to another field of scientific research? If yes, what do you think experts and upcoming researchers should be looking out for?

Birding has indeed introduced me to the concept

of "One Health," and I've become involved with the West African Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases. Their research focuses on the interactions between humans, animals, and their shared environment. I already have two related publications, with more on the way. So, yes, passion can lead to opportunities that are not only fun but also academically rewarding.



Kindly share a remarkable experience you've had on the field as a way of sharing knowledge, sir. I'm always fascinated by the dedication of birds in caring for their young. The way they get up early in the morning to hunt for food and bring it back to the nest is truly inspiring. That sense of responsibility motivates me to take care of my own family. If birds can do it, what excuse do I have? I think we can all learn from that.

What will be your advice to others who might love to know or engage in birding?

Bird watching is one of the fastest-growing hobbies globally, and people should jump in as early as they can to enjoy its numerous benefits. It's great for both physical and mental health, and it's just plain fun! The more people we have connecting with nature, the more advocates we'll have for protecting our environment.

Bird watching is one of the fastest-growing hobbies globally, and people should jump in as early as they can to enjoy its numerous benefits

Dr. Pantong

My Journey in Conservation



Stephen, Mayowa Ezekiel

I am a Research Associate at the AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI), a Center of Excellence dedicated to ornithological studies. My work is driven by a deep passion for understanding how environmental changes influence the health of wild populations. My research focuses on the evolutionary ecology of pathogens, host immunity, and the broader conservation implications of emerging diseases. Through this work, I aim to contribute to the growing body of knowledge that helps protect wildlife and mitigate the risks posed by human activities.

My journey in conservation began during my undergraduate studies in Applied Zoology at

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi. In my final year, I took a wildlife conservation course that completely shifted my academic trajectory. It opened my eyes to the urgent need for conservation efforts and inspired me to pursue this field further. This passion led me to the Conservation Biology programme at the AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, which was a transformative experience. The program not only deepened my understanding of the global challenges facing wildlife but also solidified my research interests in exploring the impacts of human activities on wildlife, health, and disease emergence.

Since then, I have been actively involved in various research projects, both independently and as part of collaborative teams. After completing my degree in Conservation Biology, I took on roles that allowed me to contribute to meaningful fieldwork and research. As a field assistant, I collected ectoparasite samples from birds in and around the Amurum Forest Reserve. I also participated in bird sampling in Nigeria's Benue region to investigate potential hybridization in paradise flycatchers. In my current role as a Research Associate, I have been consistently involved in APLORI's Constant Effort Sites (CES) program in the Amurum Forest Reserve, where I contribute to long-term ecological monitoring.

Additionally, my skills and experience have enabled me to participate in the West African Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases, WACEID project, which explores the mechanisms of zoonotic disease transmission from birds and bats to humans. This work has been particularly rewarding as it aligns with my broader interest in understanding the intersection of wildlife health, human activities, and disease dynamics.

Through these experiences, I have developed a strong foundation in both fieldwork and research, and I remain committed to contributing to the conservation of wildlife and the ecosystems they inhabit.

Chasing the Night Flyers; My Experience with Moth Research

As new students, one of the things we kept hearing right from orientation day was 'You should start thinking of a project you want to do'. The idea for my moth study came about during a casual conversation with a friend, he suggested I explore something that has not been fully studied, and he was like 'maybe you could look at butterflies or moths'. Moths immediately caught my attention. Despite their ecological importance, moths in Guinea Savannah, and Nigeria at large has not been given much research attention. Intrigued by the challenge and potential discoveries, I decided to take it on.

Fast forward to June, I shared my idea with Dr. Oskar when he came to spend two weeks of teaching with our cohort, his enthusiasm reassured me that I was on the right track. He saw the potential in the project and, along with Dr. Sola, they helped me refine my research questions and methodology. Their guidance in structuring the study—from setting up light trap to recording environmental variables—was invaluable.

The experience itself was both exciting and demanding. Setting up the light trap in different habitats, waiting for moths to arrive, and collecting them in the early hours of the next morning felt almost magical. However, the real challenge came when I had to identify them. The sheer diversity and subtle differences between species made the process overwhelming at times, but it was also a thrilling learning experience. Fortunately, I had incredible support. My supervisors and colleagues were instrumental throughout the process, assisting with fieldwork, data collection, and even troubleshooting challenges in the field.

For species identification, I relied heavily on iNaturalist and AfroMoths databases, which provided a great starting point for matching species. However, some species remained tricky to classify. That's where Hermann Staude, an expert in African moths, became invaluable. His expertise helped me identify species that I struggled with, further enriching my understanding of moth diversity.



Bello Sani Barnabas

Dr. Oskar and Dr. Sola provided constant support, helping me navigate the complexities of species identification, data collection, and data analysis. Their insights and patience made the journey smoother and more enjoyable. I couldn't have asked for better mentors.

Overall, this project was an unforgettable experience. It not only introduced me to a fascinating group of insects but also honed my research skills and fueled my curiosity for lesser-studied species. You could say it really lit up my interest in nocturnal biodiversity. I must admit, I got so wrapped up in the world of moths that I started to feel like one, and while the identification process sometimes left me in the dark, the thrill of discovery always kept me fluttering with excitement.

***Acherontia atropos******Agrius convolvuli******Neostichtis nigricostata******Conolophia sp.******Traminda rubra******Negeta luminosa******Balacra bayeri******Helicoverpa armigera******Dysgonia torrida******Amerila bauri******Asota speciosa******Zamarada bathyscaphes******Alytarchia leonina******Mythimna sp.******Hippotion celerio******Spodoptera littoralis******Amphicallia bellatrix******Daphnis nerii******Colocleora divisaria******Comibaena sp.******Nephele sp.******Grammodes bifasciata******Nephele vau******Traminda vividaria******Bocchoris impersalis******Hippotion balsaminae******Scopula nigrinotata******Maruca vitrata******Bematha sp.******Melinoessa straminea******Pingasa sp.******Zeuctoboarmia sp.***

Center for Species Survival Calls for Sustainable Urbanization

Urbanization's

Toll on Africa's Birdlife: An Alarming Trend



By 2030

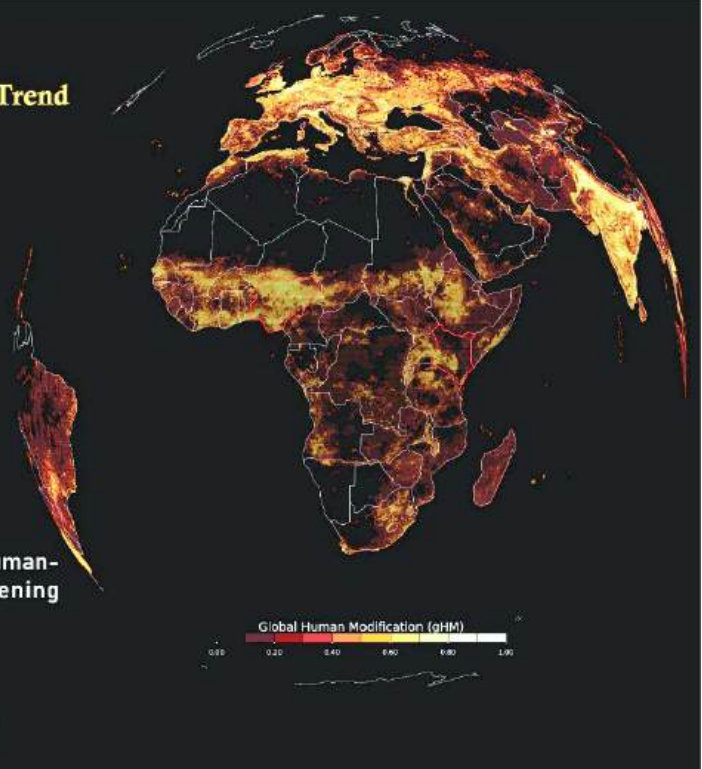
Urban areas in Africa could triple accelerating human-driven environmental changes and threatening birdlife, as evidenced by recent research.

Over 50%

of the Global
Population already
lives in cities.

>>> 70%

to live in cities by 2050



As Africa's cities expand, the continent's birdlife is undergoing dramatic changes, with far-reaching consequences for biodiversity, and that does not exclude human beings. A recent study published in *Frontiers in Conservation Science* highlights how urbanization in Nigeria and Kenya is driving declines in both the number of bird species and the variety of ecological roles they perform. These losses disrupt essential ecosystem services, such as pollination, pest control, and seed dispersal—processes that directly impact agriculture, food security, and human health.

By 2030, urban areas on the continent could triple in size, accelerating environmental changes that threaten native bird species. The study found that urban expansion is favoring generalist bird species that can adapt to disturbed environments, while habitat specialists—species that rely on specific, undisturbed habitats—are disappearing. This shift reduces functional richness, weakening the resilience of ecosystems and diminishing important ecological processes like seed dispersal and insect pest control.

The research calls for urgent action to integrate biodiversity conservation into urban planning. Protecting green spaces, preserving tree cover, and implementing policies that support sustainable development are crucial steps toward ensuring that Africa's cities remain livable for both people and wildlife.

With over half of the global population already living in cities—and this figure projected to rise to 70% by 2050 (United Nations World Urbanization Prospects)—now is the time to rethink urban growth and prioritize sustainable development.

If biodiversity continues to decline at its current rate, Africa's future cities may face not only ecological losses but also diminished quality of life for millions of people.

Read the full article here

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/conservation-science/articles/10.3389/fcosc.2024.1503408/full>

Danmallam, Bello Adamu

Crude Oil Spills Are Destroying Biodiversity and the Services they provide in the Niger Delta



Oil spills also affects the important roles birds execute in nature, like pollinating plants, spreading seeds, and controlling pests. These researchers found that in oil-affected areas, these roles are much weaker, and can make it harder for nature to recover. This means that oil spills don't just harm birds—they affect the entire environment and the people who depend on it.

This research shows that oil spills have long-lasting effects on birds and the benefits they provide to humans. It emphasises that protecting bird habitats in the Niger Delta is important, not just for wildlife, but for communities that rely on a healthy environment.

Oil spills pose serious problems for the environment. They pollute the land and water, harming plants and animals. In the Niger Delta, where oil production is a major part of the economy, these spills are destroying natural habitats and putting many bird species at risk.

Iniunam Iniunam under the supervision of Adams Chaskda (PhD) and Talatu Tende (PhD) explored how oil spills affect birds in the region, especially their numbers, types, and the roles they play in nature.

This team of researchers found that places affected by oil spills have fewer birds and less variety in species compared to areas that were not polluted. The types of birds living in these areas also change. In oil-polluted places, only birds that can survive in tough conditions remain, while birds that need specific food or shelter disappear.

This study highlights the need for habitat restoration, stricter environmental protection laws and more effective spill response measures to prevent future environmental damage.



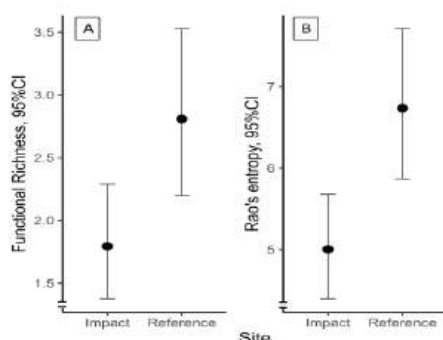
Also, Local communities are, by the recommendation of the researchers, to be actively involved in conservation efforts because their engagement will foster sustainable practices that will protect human health and the environment.

This article is published in the Environmental and Sustainability Indicators Journal.

Read more using the link.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2665972725000212?via%3Dihub>

Iniunam Iniunam



NiBAP Advocates Formulation of Policy to Strengthen Biodiversity



The Nigerian Bird Atlas Project, (NiBAP) is a project that approaches science with the human lens. The project which started in 2015 has grown to be one of the citizen science projects that advocates for collective change through the understanding of the environment we live in as humans.



Recently, the project manager, Dr. Talatu Tende led a team of researchers on an advocacy meeting with stakeholders drawn from the private and public sectors to discuss on how the call for achieving biodiversity must not just be intensified, but also generate discourse in public spheres that would in turn inform policy enactment.

The 2-day stakeholders meeting on communicating citizen science data for management and advocacy organised by the Nigerian Bird Atlas Project (NiBAP) brought together civil society organisations, non-governmental organizations, as well as government representatives from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and also conservators from the Nigerian National Park

Service to deliberate on how results from citizen science data could help in tackling the crises bedeviling biodiversity. The stand taken, and is to be pursued by all, is that stakeholders including scientists, the educational, traditional, and religious bodies must serve as conservation ambassadors by preaching and practicing conservation in their little

corners as a way of tackling climate change and strengthening Biodiversity.

Of pertinence at the meeting was the call for professional scientists to communicate their findings in simpler terms using the expertise of communication specialists by giving it a human face so as to steer discourse and policy formation.

The meeting climaxed in data analysis presentations using NiBAP database to inform policy formation on sustainable biodiversity conservation and a talk to discuss further advocacy approaches on the television arm of The Plateau Radio Television Corporation.

The two day engagement was not without fun moments as the ritual of early morning birding was observed.

The stakeholder's engagement was made possible with funding from the Darwin Initiative grants through the Tropical Biology Association in collaboration with the Kenyan Bird Map and Nigerian Bird Atlas Project.



GALLERY



2023/2024 MSc Conservation Thesis Presentation



2024/2025 Msc Conservation Cohort's Screening

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Institute's Engagements

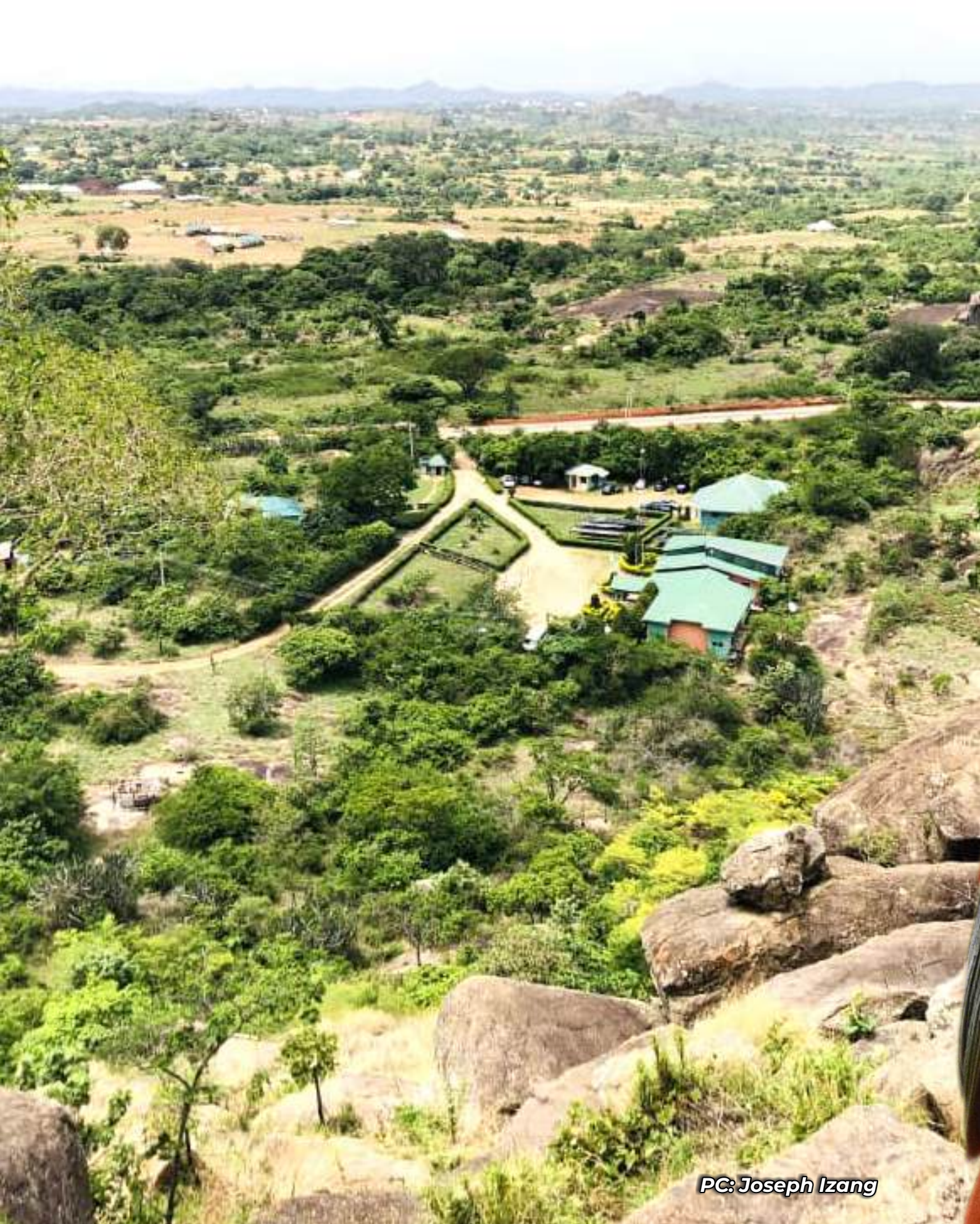
GALLERY



Social Diary



Pictures Captured by Members of Jos Bird Club



PC: Joseph Izang