



Preliminary Assessment of Bird Species Diversity in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Nigeria

Ukpeli, G. A.^{1,2}, Chukwu, O.*¹, Ibe, A. E.¹, Ezenwenyi, J. U.¹, Okafor T. T.³, Adeyemi, M. A.¹, and Ezenwankwo, S. O.¹

¹Department of Forestry and Wildlife, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

²A.P Leventis Ornithological Institute, Jos, Nigeria

³Landscape Ecology and Nature Conservation, University of Greifswald, Germany

KEYWORDS

Bird,
Distribution,
Diversity,
Ecological management
Ornithology
University,

ABSTRACT

Birds are excellent bio indicators of health of biodiversity. Urbanization has been identified as one of the causes for bird decline. This study aimed at assessing bird diversity and distribution within Chukwuemeka Odumegwu University (COOU), Igbariam campus, Anambra State, Nigeria with a view to providing baseline information for ecological management. The study area was stratified into forested and open spaces; hence, 5 plots of 100 m × 100 m size were systematically laid in each stratum. Bird activities were recorded from line transects with stating points systematically determined in each plot for one (1) month. Birds were identified to species level. The species compositions were analyzed using Shannon Wiener (H') diversity and Pielou's richness (E) indices. A total of 1984 birds distributed in birds consisting of 73 species distributed among 28 families were recorded COOU. Cisticolidae and Estrildidae were the most dominate family. *Streptopelia semitorquata* (Red-eyed dove) had the highest Relative density (RD) of 13.58% in the open space and 21.30% in the forested habitats. The result showed that COOU had H' and E had values of 3.20 and 0.461 for the forested area and 3.18 and 0.463 for the open area, respectively. The study concluded that COOU Igbariam campus has high bird species diversity. Furthermore, the design of programmes that encourage nature conservation were recommended.

*CORRESPONDING
AUTHOR

onye20042000@yahoo.com,
+2348032633835

INTRODUCTION

Birds are feathered, winged, egg-laying vertebrates which are often termed as avifauna. Birds belong to the Kingdom "Animalia," Phylum "Chordata" and Class "Aves", they have a worldwide distribution, living in and around rural and urban, forested and residential areas and are the most noticeable group in the animal kingdom (Zedler, 2003). The bright colours, distinct songs and calls, and showy displays of birds add fun to human life. Birds live and breed in most terrestrial habitats and on all countries including Nigeria which have diverse bird species of birds in all its ecological regions (Labe *et al.*, 2018).

The increased disappearance of avifauna species over the years especially as a result of the anthropogenic activities is a great challenge to conservation. The United Nations (UN) estimates 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas, with the proportion expected to increase to 68% by 2050 (UN, 2018). Increase in world's population is positively correlated with deforestation (Carr, 2004), leading to loss of biodiversity. In Nigeria, the destruction of natural habitats continues rapidly, resulting in the depletion of the country's bird biodiversity and distribution (Oladeji *et al.*, 2012).

Diverse urban forests can also function as wildlife habitats for a wide range of organisms especially wild birds (Jaman *et al.*, 2021). University campuses are among urban structures that usually have more trees and can provide various ecosystem services (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Various campuses in higher institutions represent a fundamental component of biodiversity in many parts of the world (Hernandez *et al.*, 2018). Irrespective of the fact that institutional campuses have been linked to positive health and well-being (Holt *et al.*, 2019), and they are primarily designed to provide a picturesque environment for learning and leisure, these campuses have the capacity to support high avifauna diversity due to their vegetation complexity (Carbó-Ramírez *et al.*, 2010; Lessi *et al.*, 2016). High institutional campuses have been reported to serve as important habitats with the capacity to host a wide variety of fauna and flora (Colding and Barthel, 2017). For example, the Pune City University Campus, in the Western Indian state of Maharashtra, even though covers about 5% of the city's total landmass, is said to harbor half of the city's birds, butterfly and plant species. Surprisingly, a quarter of these taxa were found nowhere else other than the university campus (Kulkarni *et al.*, 2001).

Successful conservation requires the urban habitat matrix to provide enough resources and connectivity for local species, in addition to habitat preservation (Shoffner *et al.*, 2018). Thus, acting to alter urban vegetation communities can positively impact bird species diversity and how the birds are distributed in the area (Threlfall *et al.*, 2016). While birds are seemingly ubiquitous throughout Nigeria, their ecologies in the urban ecosystems remain poorly understood. Thus, this study assessed bird diversity and distribution within Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus, Nigeria.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study area

The study was conducted in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu University (COOU) Igbariam Campus Anambra State, Nigeria. The University covers an area of about 714 hectares and located between longitude 6.94869° to 6.98174° E and latitude 6.27321° to 6.31003° N (Fig. 1) on elevation of 76 m above sea level. The climate is dominated with distinct dry and wet seasons with a temperature range of 24 – 36°C and annual rainfall of 1520-2020 mm. The vegetation in this area is half cleared dominated by farmlands with a wide expanse of palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*) plantation. It has a table to gentle sloppy terrain with streams some of which dries up at the peak of dry season (Ibeh and Nworji, 2022).

Instrument Used

The Vortex 8×42 Binoculars was used for sighting of the birds from a distance, features such as feather shape and colors, beak, eye colors, legs and body size, and bird in flight were used to identify individual bird species and confirmed using HELM Field Guide (Birds of Western Africa by Borrow and Demey, 2014). A Sound recorder from mobile device was used to record the birds heard, this was later sent to an Ornithologist Expert for a second verification to reduce errors. Birdlasser mobile application was used to note the birds seen and heard, which formulate the data into a CSV file. For safety, a pair of Safety Boots, Rain coat, Water-proof back pack and Forestry overall was used. To map out transects, Global Positioning System (GPS) Map was used to measure the distance of transects and to take coordinates of the area which the study was carried out, Cutlass, Distance tape to measure the area.

Data Collection and Analysis

The areas inside the campus were stratified into forested and open spaces (Bibby *et al.*, 2000; Sutherland, 2006) depending on the activity and position of birds (Bibby *et al.*, 2000), a systematic selection was used to select five (5) plots of 100 m × 100 m for the forested areas (PLT 1 – 5) and also for the open areas (PLT 6 – 10), which gave a total of ten (10) plots. To ensure the independence of each plots, were laid 50 m apart from each other from 7h30 to 11h00 (Morning) and from 3h00 to 6h30 (Evening). All the selected plots were shuffled into all the designated time of the day to ensure no bird relating to time was missed out.

Within each plot, line transects were laid, starting points each line transects were systematically selected for each day to eliminate some areas being left out and five (5) plots data was collected morning and evening for five (5) days in a week, for four (4) weeks. The time ration was also systematically spread out to each transect. This is to ensure bird activities were properly collected with respect to time.

The data collected for this project was subjected to descriptive and correlation analysis. Shannon – wiener's diversity (Shannon and Weaver, 1949) and Pielou's evenness (Adekunle *et al.*, 2013) indices were also computed. The mathematical expressions are as:

$$H' = - \sum_{i=1}^s P_i \ln P_i \quad (\text{Equation 1})$$

$$E = \frac{H'}{H_{max}} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^s P_i \ln P_i}{\ln (s)} \quad (\text{Equation 2})$$

Where,

H= Shannon-Weiner index

Pi= Relative abundance (RD) of the ith species,

S= the total number of species in the community

ln= natural log

i= 1, 2, . . . , n.

This analysis was implemented using Microsoft Excel 2010.

RESULTS

This study enumerated a total of 1984 birds consisting of 73 species distributed among 28 families. The family Cisticolidae and Estrildidae were the most dominate family of the bird population in this study area with the largest number of bird species representing 10.00% each of the total number of bird species in the population (Table 1). The bird species with the highest frequency was *Streptopelia semitorquata* (Red-eyed dove) with Relative density (RD) of 13.58% in the open and 21.30% in the forested habitats. This was followed by *Lonchura cucullata* (Bronze Mannikin) with RD= 11.19% in the forested habitat and *Milvusa egyptius* (Yellow-billed Kite) with RD= 6.63% in the open habitat.

Bird species diversity and evenness in COOU are presented in Table 2. Shannon-Weiner index of diversity (H') and Pielou's evenness index (E) had a value of 3.20 and 0.461 respectively for the forested area, 3.18 and 0.463 respectively for the open area, and 3.19 and 0.46 respectively for the study area (pooled data) (Table 2).

Table 1: Distribution of bird species and frequency within each bird family in the study area

FAMILY	RD	SPECIES	SN	OPEN			SN	FORESTED		
				Scientific Name	F	RD %		Scientific Name	F	RD %
Accipitridae	7.14	African Goshawk	1	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>	2	0.21				
		Black-winged Kite	2	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	2	0.21				
		Lizard Buzzard	3	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	5	0.52	1	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	6	0.59
		Yellow-billed Kite	4	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	64	6.63	2	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	53	5.20
		African Harrier-Hawk					3	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	7	0.69
Alcedinidae	1.43	Woodland Kingfisher	5	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	11	1.14	4	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	10	0.98
Apodidae	1.43	African Palm Swift	6	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	1	0.10	5	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	8	0.79
Ardeidae	4.29	Black-headed Heron	7	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	35	3.63	6	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	3	0.29
		Little Egret	9	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	43	4.46	7	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	57	5.59
		Western Cattle Egret	10	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	26	2.69	8	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	50	4.91
Bucerotidae	2.86	African Hornbill	Grey 11	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	19	1.97	9	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	13	1.28

		African Pied	12	<i>Lophoceros fasciatus</i>	5	0.52				
Burhinidae	1.43	Senegal Thick-knee	13	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	2	0.21				
Cisticolidae	10.00	Croaking Cisticola	14	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>	3	0.31	10	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>	1	0.10
		Grey-backed Camaroptera	15	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>	2	0.21	11	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>	3	0.29
		Short-winged Cisticola					12	<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>	1	0.10
		Singing Cisticola					13	<i>Cisticola cantans</i>	7	0.69
		Red-faced Cisticola	16	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>	13	1.35	14	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>	29	2.85
		Tawny-flanked Prinia	17	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	6	0.62	15	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	9	0.88
		Winding Cisticola	18	<i>Cisticola marginatus</i>	10	1.04	16	<i>Cisticola marginatus</i>	2	0.20
Columbidae	7.14	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	19	<i>Turtur afer</i>	20	2.08	17	<i>Turtur afer</i>	19	1.87
		Laughing Dove	20	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	36	3.73	18	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	15	1.47
		Red-eyed Dove	21	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	131	13.58	19	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	217	21.30
		Tambourine Dove	22	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	1	0.10				
		Vinaceous Dove	23	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	2	0.21	20	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	22	2.16
Coraciidae	1.43	Blue-bellied Roller					21	<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>	11	1.08
Corvidae	1.43	Pied Crow	24	<i>Corvus albus</i>	45	4.66	22	<i>Corvus albus</i>	18	1.77
Cuculidae	5.71	Jacobin Cuckoo	25	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	1	0.10	23	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	1	0.10
		Senegal Coucal	26	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	13	1.35	24	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	13	1.28
		Diederik Cuckoo					25	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	1	0.10
		Klaas's Cuckoo					26	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	2	0.20
Estrildidae	10.0	Bar-breasted Firefinch	27	<i>Lagonosticta rufopicta</i>	2	0.21	27	<i>Lagonosticta rufopicta</i>	7	0.69
		Black-and-white Mannikin	28	<i>Lonchura bicolor</i>	1	0.10	28	<i>Lonchura bicolor</i>	34	
		Black-bellied Firefinch					29	<i>Lagonosticta rara</i>	2	0.20
		Bronze Mannikin	29	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	55	5.70	30	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	114	11.19
		Grey-headed Nigrita	30	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>	1	0.10	31	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>	2	0.20
		Orange-cheeked Waxbill	31	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	6	0.62	32	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	2	0.20
		Red-billed Firefinch	32	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	4	0.41	33	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	9	0.88
Falconidae	2.86	African Hobby					34	<i>Falco cuvierii</i>	1	0.10
		Common Kestrel	33	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	8	0.83	35	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	2	0.20
Fringillidae	1.43	Yellow-fronted Canary					36	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>	15	1.47

Hirundinidae	1.43	Ethiopian Swallow	34	<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>	1	0.10				
Malaconotidae	1.43	Black-crowned Tchagra	35	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	3	0.31	37	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	11	1.08
Meropidae	1.43	White-throated Bee-eater	36	<i>Merops albicollis</i>	24	2.49				
Motacillidae	1.43	Yellow-throated Longclaw	37	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>	5	0.52	38	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>	5	0.49
Musophagidae	1.43	Western Plantain-eater	38	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	17	1.76	39	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	17	1.67
Nectariniidae	5.71	Copper Sunbird	39	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>	7	0.73	40	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>	28	
		Olive Sunbird	40	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	1	0.10	41	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	1	0.10
		Splendid Sunbird					42	<i>Cinnyris coccinigastrus</i>	21	2.06
		Variable Sunbird	41	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>	16	1.66	43	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>	27	2.65
Passeridae	2.86	Bush Petronia					44	<i>Gymnoris dentata</i>	3	0.29
		Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	42	<i>Passer griseus</i>	149	15.4	45	<i>Passer griseus</i>	33	3.24
Phasianidae	4.29	Common Quail					46	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1	0.10
		Double-spurred Francolin	43	<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>	13	1.35	47	<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>	16	1.57
		Helmeted Guineafowl	44	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	1	0.10				
Platysteiridae	1.43	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	45	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	10	1.04	48	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	7	0.69
Ploceidae	8.57	Black-necked Weaver	46	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	15	1.55	49	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	15	1.47
		Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver	47	<i>Plocepasser superciliosus</i>	5	0.52				
		Heuglin's Masked Weaver	48	<i>Ploceus heuglini</i>	15	1.55				
		Northern Red Bishop	49	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>	13	1.35				
		Vieillot's Black Weaver					50	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>	11	1.08
		Yellow-mantled Widowbird	50	<i>Euplectes macroura</i>	67	6.94				
Pycnonotidae	5.71	Common Bulbul	51	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	22	2.28	51	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	43	4.22
		Red-tailed Leaflove	52	<i>Phyllastrephus scandens</i>	3	0.31	52	<i>Phyllastrephus scandens</i>	3	0.29
		Simple Greenbul	53	<i>Chlorocichla simplex</i>	2	0.21				
		Yellow-whiskered Greenbul					53	<i>Eurillas latirostris</i>	1	0.10
Scopidae	1.43	Hamerkop					54	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	1	0.10
Turdidae	1.43	African Thrush					55	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	4	0.39
Viduidae	2.86	Pin-tailed Whydah	54	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	1	0.10	56	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	4	0.39
		Village Indigobird					57	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>	1	0.10
SUMMARY	100			H'=3.18	965	100		H'=3.20	1019	100

DISCUSSION

This study shows the diversity and distribution of birds in COOU Igbariam campus. In the Campus, the families: Cisticolidae and Estrildidae were the most dominant family in the study area. This result was similar to Nsores *et al.* (2018) the most diverse avian family in the Federal College of Education (Technical) Gombe, Nigeria was the Estrildidae family. This was not similar to Ogunyemi (2020) who reported that Nectarinidae, Columbidae and Pycnontidae as the most dominant families of birds in Ekiti State University, Ado - Ekiti, Nigeria. This was also in disagreement with Eveso *et al.* (2022) that reported Ploceidae as the most dominant family in Federal University Gashua, North-East Nigeria; the differences might be as a result of the difference in the ecology of the study areas.

Streptopelia semitorquata (Red-eyed Dove) and *Lonchura cucullata* (Bronze Mannikin) were the dominant bird species in the study area. From the study, it is evident that the open and forested strata in the Campus share similar and dissimilar bird species and the frequency of each species are almost the same number. The Shannon's diversity index of COOU had a value of 3.20 and 3.18 respectively for the Forested and Open Area, this indicates a fairly higher diversity in the Forested strata ($H > 3.0$). This result agrees with Magurran (2004) who stated that a low H' value generally suggests a study area with few species and a few dominant species, while a high H' value suggests considerably more dominant species. These values were greater than 2.85 Ekiti State University, Ado- Ekiti (Ogunyemi, 2020) and less than 4.218 for Covenant University Ota (Okosodo *et al.*, 2016) both in Southwestern Nigeria. Pielou's evenness for the bird species in the open strata of 0.461 was also slightly higher than that of the open strata with a 0.002 difference. This also implies that the species in Open strata are more evenly distributed than the forested strata, though the forested strata have more diversity. The active disturbance of the open area might have also contributed a factor, due to the fact that the area is characterized with active farms, roads side, classrooms and construction sites. Farming activities such as Rice and Cassava farming are very popular on the campus, including cattle grazing.

The disparities in bird species diversity and abundance among the various land use types may be due to variations in land use and forest heterogeneity, which affect food, cover, predation danger, and microclimatic fluctuation (Okosodo *et al.*, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study shows the diversity and distribution of birds in the Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus, Nigeria. Bird species diversity was higher in the forest area than open area within the campus. *Streptopelia semitorquata* (Red-eyed Dove) and *Lonchura cucullata* (Bronze Mannikin) were the dominant bird species and Cisticolidae and Estrildidae were the most dominant families in the study area. The University management should design programmes to encourage nature conservation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors acknowledge IDEA WILD for donating a pair of Vortex 8×42 Binoculars through the equipment grant to support this study. We also acknowledge the A.P Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) and Nigerian Bird Arlas Project (NiBAP) for training and technical support throughout the project. Furthermore, we thank the management of the COOU for allowing us to carry out data collection in the campus.

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