

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

Connecting people to nature.



From the Executive Director



Dear Friends and Partners in Conservation,

The last months in Sierra Leone were all about the national elections. Many of our international partners thought we have to take a break and slow down on our speed. But again, we were able to prove that even if the circumstances are difficult, nothing can stop us from our engagement for the environment and nature.

We had two wonderful celebrations with our School Nature Clubs in different parts of the country, one of which was the World Environment Day. This year, the global theme was "Solutions to Plastic Pollution". We witnessed very impressive activities from our School Nature Clubs to raise awareness for this topic. The other was the celebration of World Migratory Bird Day.

But as always, there are not only celebrations and positive stories we can share with you. There are still so many challenges for all of us. The mistreatment and slaughtering of Hooded Vultures after the fall of our iconic Cotton Tree showed us the dire need to continue partnering with all like-forces to educate people about the importance of all species and their protection. On international level, we are joining forces with other BirdLife International partners to protect Africa's World Heritage Sites.

I wish you all an interesting reading. We are very grateful to know that you are always on our side when we go out to protect our nature.

Dr. Sheku Kamara
Executive Director of CSSL

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Bird Watching, Dance Competition and Community Engagements - World Migratory Day, 2023

On 13th May 2023, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) celebrated World Migratory Bird Day in Foria, Diang chiefdom as part of the BftW project activities. Migratory birds are special - and so was the celebration.

Of course, it is not possible to celebrate an international bird day without a bird watching activity. The CSSL team in Kabala went on bird watching with pupils and teachers from five School Nature Clubs from Foria Junior Secondary School, RC Solia Primary School, Tarabiatul Primary School, RC Nyalluyia Primary School and RC Primary School.

After the bird watching activity, the CSSL team engaged community members and explained why World Migratory Bird Day is celebrated all around the globe. The community members became aware of the global connection of habitats and the travelling routes of birds from Africa to Europe. As the theme for this year was "WATER - sustaining bird life," the focus of the engagement was on the importance of clean water sources and what each and every person can do to sustain a healthy environment for birds, animals and humans.

The highlight of the day was a dance competition organised for SNC pupils that was dubbed, "Dancing for migratory birds". The winners of the competition were applauded and showed their happiest faces to the audience when their school was announced as the winner.



"It was so amazing to see all these birds which live just in our neighbourhood. I am very happy that I had the opportunity to be part of the bird watching. I am sure I will continue to look out for birds when I am at home,"

Sialu Conteh, SNC pupil, Foria Junior Secondary School

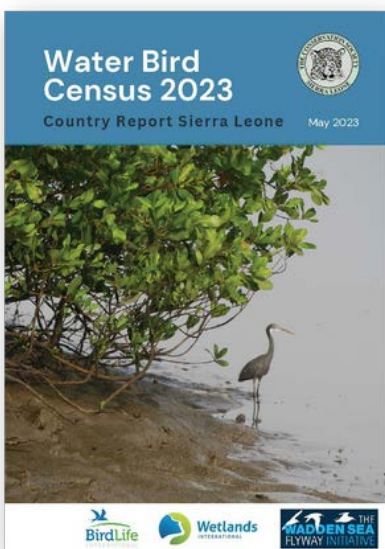


"It was just wonderful to see the children so motivated and engaged during the whole day. I am especially happy that they really enjoyed the bird watching and were eager to learn. We are more than content with the celebration of this day as we can see that, all community members and other invited guests were able to increase their knowledge about birds, about environmental conservation and all this in a very nice atmosphere and in a perfect mood - also thanks to the amazing dance performances."

Papanie Bay-Sesay, Senior Biodiversity and Project Manager



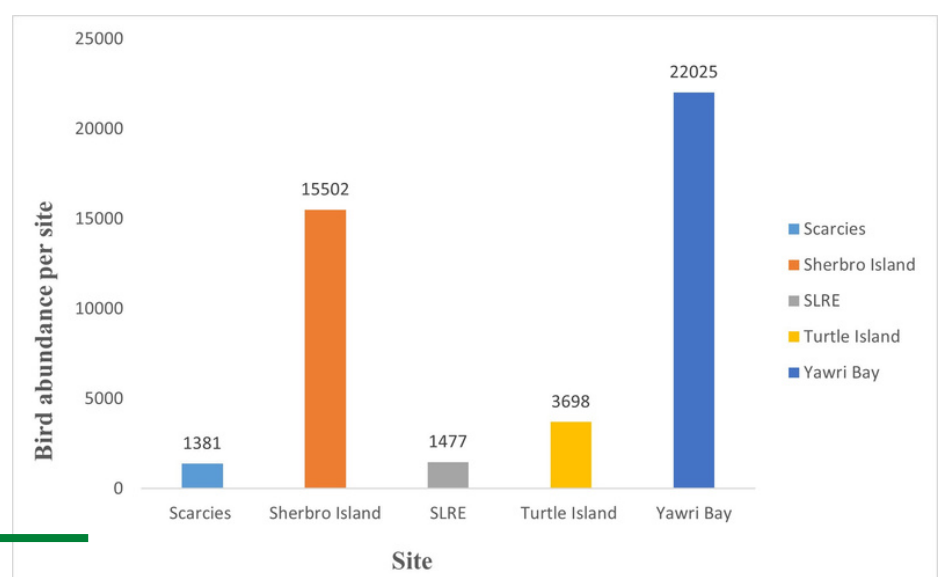
44,083 birds, 63 species, 10 species of conservation interest - Water Bird Census 2023



From January – February, 2023, two teams led by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, conducted the annual Water Bird Census. The bird count, which is part of the international Water Bird Census, takes place every third year along the East Atlantic Flyway to observe numbers and sites of migratory and resident birds along the West African Coast.

The country report was published in May with interesting outcomes: At the Yawri Bay, for example, 10 species were recorded that are of conservation interest. That gives us motivation to continue our efforts to help communities protecting and conserving the eco-systems of coastal regions and their livelihood.

The graphic shows the abundance of birds per counting site. The counting took place along the coast and was divided into five sections: Scarcies, Shebro Island, Sierra Leone River Estuary, Turtle Island and Yawri Bay.





CSSL Celebrates World Environment Day 2023 with School Nature Clubs

The 2023 World Environment Day was celebrated across the world with the theme, "Solutions to Plastic Pollution". Every activity undertaken on the day (5th June) was geared towards raising public awareness and mobilising actions from all and sundry to end plastic pollution on the environment. The menace caused by plastic pollution is compounding more pressure on the world as it currently faces the daunting challenge of mitigating the devastating effects of climate change on human populations and biodiversity. An estimated 11 million tonnes of plastic waste empties into the oceans every year, a figure that is expected to triple by the year 2040. This obviously has grave effects on marine and coastal species, and by extension, human beings.

In a view to mark this day, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) worked with a host of School Nature Clubs (SNCs) in the Western Area and North of the country to figure out solutions and also raise awareness among their colleague pupils and school communities.

In the Western Area, a day long workshop was conducted on May 25, 2023 for SNC members, during which some very impressive solutions and actions were developed by the pupils. Key among such solutions included the use of paper bags instead of plastic bags, public refusal to accept plastic bags in all formal and informal market places, recycling waste plastic materials for decorative purposes, etc. The school pupils also developed plans to conduct sensitization sessions through drama performances and face-to-face engagement for their school folks and their respective school communities on the hazards of plastic pollution.

"Everyone should take care of waste plastic; we should not just litter them around. I would like the government to make littering of plastic and other garbage on the environment a punishable crime..."

Bernadette Massaquoi, Principal, Hontingdon Secondary School, Jui

On June 5, the Communication, Advocacy and Environmental Education Department of CSSL witnessed a drama performance and community door-to-door outreach sensitization conducted by the Huntingdon Secondary School, Jui, outside Freetown. This was followed by radio and television discussion programs organised to continue to raise public awareness around the issues of plastic pollution.

Panelists for both programs were drawn from the Environment Protection Agency - Sierra Leone, SNC pupils and Teacher Coordinators, and staff of CSSL. The discussions were conducted on the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) television and the Society for Radio Democracy - 98.1 FM. Similar sensitization sessions were also undertaken by SNCs in Kunya community, Sambaia Bendugu chiefdom in Tonkolili district, northern Sierra Leone.



Africa's World Heritage Sites under threat

protect Africa's natural heritage from mismanagement and damaging development

May 5th is African World Heritage Day. On this day, the world joins Africa in celebrating its unique cultural and natural heritage. Natural Heritage sites, such as Mosi-Oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls on the Zambia/Zimbabwe border, showcase the marvels of natural areas and their role in protecting rare plant and animal species. Cultural heritage areas demonstrate the legacy of human artifacts or intangible attributes inherited from the past.

Adopted over 50 years ago, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention provides for the identification and protection of cultural and natural heritage sites around the world. These sites contribute significantly to sustainable socio-economic development, such as eco-tourism. They also provide critical ecosystem services – such as water provision, flood control and carbon absorption, – that support the well-being of and are a source of livelihood to many local communities.

Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List based on their 'Outstanding Universal Value' (OUV) – the cultural and/or natural aspects of a site that are so exceptionally significant that they are of common importance for both present and future generations of all humanity. Parties to the World Heritage Convention commit to protect and conserve cultural and natural heritage, and to present and transmit such heritage to future generations.

Despite this, World Heritage Sites across the world are under increasing pressure from a variety of human activities, including the development of roads, railways and oil pipelines, extractive activities like mining, oil and gas exploration, and expansion of human settlements and urban areas and agriculture. It is imperative that decisions about whether to approve such projects be informed by proper consideration of impacts on sites' OUV. Unfortunately, however, there is a mounting number of examples from Africa in which such impacts have been disregarded and decisions of the World Heritage Committee seemingly ignored. There are also worrying examples of sites being mismanaged and neglected, resulting in the gradual erosion of the values for which they were established.

While Africa is home to about 12% of all inscribed sites worldwide, a staggering 39% of African World Heritage Sites are on the List of World Heritage in Danger – those at risk of losing their OUV.

The BirdLife International Africa Partnership – a network of 26 civil society organisations in 26 African countries championing conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development – has constantly urged African governments to secure World Heritage Sites from damaging development and mismanagement. In 2021, BirdLife Partners in Southern Africa published a joint statement ahead of the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee, voicing their concerns over the threats facing key World Heritage Sites. They called upon African States Parties to comply with their obligations towards the protection and sustained conservation of these sites.

Read the whole article and learn more about the joint statement
<https://cs-sl.org/africa-world-heritage-day-2023/>



#BeatPlasticPollution #Solutions2PlasticPollution

World Environment Day 2023 is a reminder that people’s actions on plastic pollution matters. It is time to #BeatPlasticPollution! Learn why plastic is so dangerous for us and our environment and see what you can do to stop plastic pollution.

Dangers of Plastic Pollution to Humans and Nature

Biodiversity

More than 90% of all birds and fish are believed to have plastic particles in their stomachs. Animals like fish, birds and other sea animals, i.e. turtles eat plastic because they think it is food. This leads to starvation, endocrine disruption, stunted growth in some species and broken-down digestive systems.

Human Health

Microplastics – tiny plastic particles up to 5mm in diameter – find their way into food, water and air. It is estimated that each person on the planet consumes more than 50,000 plastic particles per year – and many more if inhalation is considered. The burning of plastic waste has multiple health impact including risk of heart diseases and aggravating respiratory problems such as asthma and emphysema.

Climate Crises

Plastic is predominantly produced from oil and gas, both of which are fossil fuels. The more plastic we make, the more fossil fuel is required, the more we intensify the climate crisis.

text and design: Mariama Kargbo and Kathrin Prinzing

We can all bring the change which is needed!

Let’s beat Plastic Pollution together

Refuse, Reuse, Reduce, Recycle and Educate

Spread the word!

You can download our flyer on Solutions to Plastic Pollution and share the information with your friends, family, colleagues and communities: <https://cs-sl.org/wed2023/>





"Hands off our Vultures" A poem for a forgotten hero - the Hooded Vulture



In the night of May 24 2023, the iconic Cotton Tree in the center of Freetown fell during a devastating storm. While the whole country and Sierra Leonians around the globe were shocked by the photos from the destroyed tree, a second shock came: videos were circulating on social media showing people mistreating vultures which fell down from the tree, and which were not able to escape from the clutches of the raving storm. People started to slaughter these wonderful and special birds. This sad occasion inspired me, Elizabeth L. A. Kamara, board member of CSSL, to write a poem for the Hooded Vulture - one of the globally threatened species in Sierra Leone.

Hands off our Vultures

Hands off our vultures
Hands off we pray
Vultures are nature's darlings
And yet endangered
Our environment we've destroyed
With hands that should build
And now we turn to vultures
Made homeless by the fall
Of our famous Cotton Tree
Do you not know that these scavengers
Are a valuable part of the ecosystem?
Do you not know that vultures are
Becoming extinct?

The White-Backed Vultures
And Hooded Vultures of Mama Salone
Are dwindling like the forest cover
"Nature's Clean-up Crew"
Wired to clean the environment
Help keep some diseases at bay
Do you know how the carcass
Of Mama Marie's cat disappeared?
Pa Peter's rat poison killed 12 rats
Where are they now?
Ask the natural cleansing agents
-Vultures

Fresh carcasses they consume,
But will devour rotten remains
And rid your bins and streets
Of stench of carcasses,
Reduce carbon emissions,
And eliminate some bacteria
You don't have to pay or thank them
Unlike Masada

In peace, let's leave the vultures
They pledge to make us comfortable
They pledge to protect us
They pledge to keep us healthy
Don't cook our garbage cleaners
They're here to do us a favour

The monumental tree has fallen
Let's save the dispossessed vultures
(We once or twice were dispossessed too)
Let's make a pact to preserve them
They deserve no less
Hands off our vultures.

By Elizabeth L. A. Kamara
May 2023



We thank all our partners for their support and help for our daily work!



WE FOR NATURE.
NATURE FOR US.

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