

Nigerian Bird Atlas Project (NiBAP) 2021 Report

Background: The Nigerian Bird Atlas Project (NiBAP) which kick-started at the end of 2015 has continued to work to promote public and local participation through citizen science and volunteering to map the distribution of Nigeria's birds and update information about their natural history. NiBAP management team has continued to create awareness via monthly webinars, workshops/seminars; aimed at introducing the project idea and its protocol to key stakeholders around Nigeria. This has been accompanied afterwards by on-the-field training for participants on the protocol and use of BirdLasser as well as dedicated atlas expeditions. NiBAP's "Bird Club" strategy relies largely on the growing and dispersing network of APLORI alumni. This strategy builds a community of nature enthusiasts around skilled and well-trained ornithologists (mostly APLORI alumni), allowing informal and social skills/information exchange within clubs. Since its launch in December 2015, over 250 active volunteers have been recruited, about 30 bird clubs have been established with over 1000 members.

Progress so far: Through the project's strategy, NiBAP has increased the number of bird clubs in Nigeria to about 30 bird clubs (See: www.nibap.ng/clubs), and also appointed Regional Representatives in the various regions of the country to coordinate the activities of the growing body of bird clubs. The number of active atlasers has also grown from the pioneer NiBAP team of 3 atlasers in 2015 to over 250 active atlasers as at November 2021. Furthermore, the number of atlased pentads has gone from just seven pentads at the end of 2015 to 3,638 atlased pentads (~33%) to date from the 11,088 needed for a complete coverage (Table 1). The project is building up a database of historical records dating back to the 70s. Awareness raising and information dissemination reaches close to 5000 people on our Facebook page alone, aside our other social media platforms. Based on successes in Nigeria, NiBAP was invited and is currently providing technical support for the establishment of similar country-level projects across West & Central Africa. Start-up workshops have so far been delivered in Sierra Leone and Liberia in 2019 and a virtual workshop was delivered in Ghana and Cameroon in 2020. As a follow up to a seminar workshop organized for officers of the Nigerian National Park Service, the NiBAP team was in Gashaka Gumti National Park to continue to sharpen the ornithological identification skills of the staff; and also launch the Gashaka Bird Club. A Biodiversity Information Development BID grant was received from GBIF at the beginning of this year and is aimed at strengthening collaboration, mobilizing data, and integrating under the umbrella of the African Bird Atlas Project (ABAP) all ongoing national and sub-regional projects in West, East and Southern Africa.

2021 Activities: To maximize the efforts of the NiBAP team in awareness creation about the project and the project's protocol within institutions of higher learning via workshop/seminar presentations; this year NiBAP inaugurated the 'NiBAP Regional Representatives' within the various geopolitical regions of the country. These regional representatives are expected to among other things; organize and give seminar presentation about the project and its protocol, identify possible places for new bird clubs around their regions of base and start up such bird clubs. This year the project team also extended its awareness creation efforts to environmental/biodiversity-related organizations aside universities, namely; (i) The National Park Service, with the seminar held at the Parks' headquarters, Abuja and participants drawn from the seven Nigerian National Parks. (ii) Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Bauchi State, (iii) Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa, Ondo State and Oswald Waller College of Education Lifidi, Shendam, Plateau State. These workshop/seminar presentations were followed afterwards with field outings to allow participants get on-the-field experience of the atlas protocol as well as the use of the atlas mobile App – BirdLasser. Seminar workshops scheduled to come up in the month of November are; (i) Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, Abuja (17th – 18th November), (ii) Federal Ministry of environment, Abuja (19th – 20th November), Taraba State University, Jalingo and University of Benin, Edo State scheduled for the month of December.

As a result of the consistent breakdown and the high cost of maintenance of the field vehicle it was auctioned out. A fairly used Toyota Tacoma was purchased from the money realized from the disposal of the old vehicle with kind support from the management of the institute; and a little extra amount added up from the project.

Although the pandemic caused some bit of setback for the project in the year 2020 as a result of restriction in movements, with relaxation in the nationwide lockdown from the global pandemic in 2021, field expeditions picked up immediately at the beginning of the year with significant atlas coverage. Active atlas activities were undertaken by our four atlas teams within the country as well as few small organized groups of individuals that carried out atlas expeditions in and around Taraba, Jigawa, Yobe, Nassarawa, Kano, Sokoto, Edo, Enugu, Delta, Kogi, Cross River, Osun, Ekiti and Ondo States just to mention a few. The Arewa Atlas Team (AAT) had their field expeditions for their first and second quarter outings around Nassarawa and Kano States; where the team made up of 18 participants atlas about 129 pentads in 5 days during their second quarter outing; the highest number of pentads covered by the team in a single outing surpassing its target for an outing. The atlas activities of the South-East South-South Atlas Team (SESSAT) took place in and around Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo and Delta States. The South West Atlas team undertook their outings for the year around Osun, Ogun, Oyo and Lagos States. As at 1st November 2021, all these atlas activities produced 1,642 cards including 735 species from 1,108 pentads by over 100 active atlasers in 2021 alone, being the highest number of atlas pentads and submitted cards since the onset of the project (Table 1). NiBAP also continues to provide technical support for the launch of other country level projects. Plans are also ongoing for workshops in The Gambia, Ethiopia and possibly Rwanda.

Planned work for 2022: The Nigeria Bird Atlas Project team will continue to pursue its mandate to conduct dedicated atlas and recruit volunteers for the project in the coming year. However, all atlas will continue to adhere to the global and national guidelines for protection against COVID-19 during all atlas activities. NiBAP will continue to utilize virtual platforms for seminars and workshops and when and where physical meetings are possible, we will continue to carry out these activities in accordance with the stipulated social distancing guidelines. Through these channels, we plan to continue to organize and deliver seminars and workshops. The team will continue efforts to establish more Atlas Teams and bird clubs around the country as the goal remains to have at least one bird club in each of Nigeria's 774 Local Government Areas. Also, the NiBAP Regional Representatives will continue to act as trouble shooters for NiBAP within their various regions, and when possible, the NiBAP team will visit newly setup bird clubs and atlas teams in order to provide training and equipment to encourage and consolidate on volunteer activities in those areas. In the coming year, the NiBAP team will continue to pay visits to staff of the Nigerian National Parks as a follow up to the seminar/workshop delivered to the officers of these protected areas at the parks' headquarters Abuja. BirdLife Sweden and Swiss Ornithological Institute have been the major funders of the project.

Contributions to African Bird Atlas Project: With several physical and virtual workshops organized in previous years by NiBAP to launch projects in Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Ghana and Liberia; the NiBAP team was invited to lead the application for the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) grant. The received grant is intended mainly to provide technical support for the expansion of atlas activities across Africa through the establishment of similar country-level projects in West & Central Africa through mainly strengthening partnership across the existing projects across Nigeria, Kenya and Southern Africa.

Table 1: Summary data from atlas in Nigeria (2015-2021)

Year	1 card	2 cards	3 cards	4 or more	Pentads covered	Pentads in area	Total Cards (FP)	Total species (FP)
AllYears	2,834	507	129	168	3,638	11,088	6,801	922
2021	992	78	10	28	1,108	11,088	1,642	735
2020	695	79	19	21	814	11,088	1,323	700
2019	675	101	26	37	839	11,088	1,360	714
2018	704	70	25	32	831	11,088	1,296	697
2017	468	56	8	9	541	11,088	744	634
2016	278	41	5	7	331	11,088	429	572
2015	7	0	0	0	7	11,088	7	203

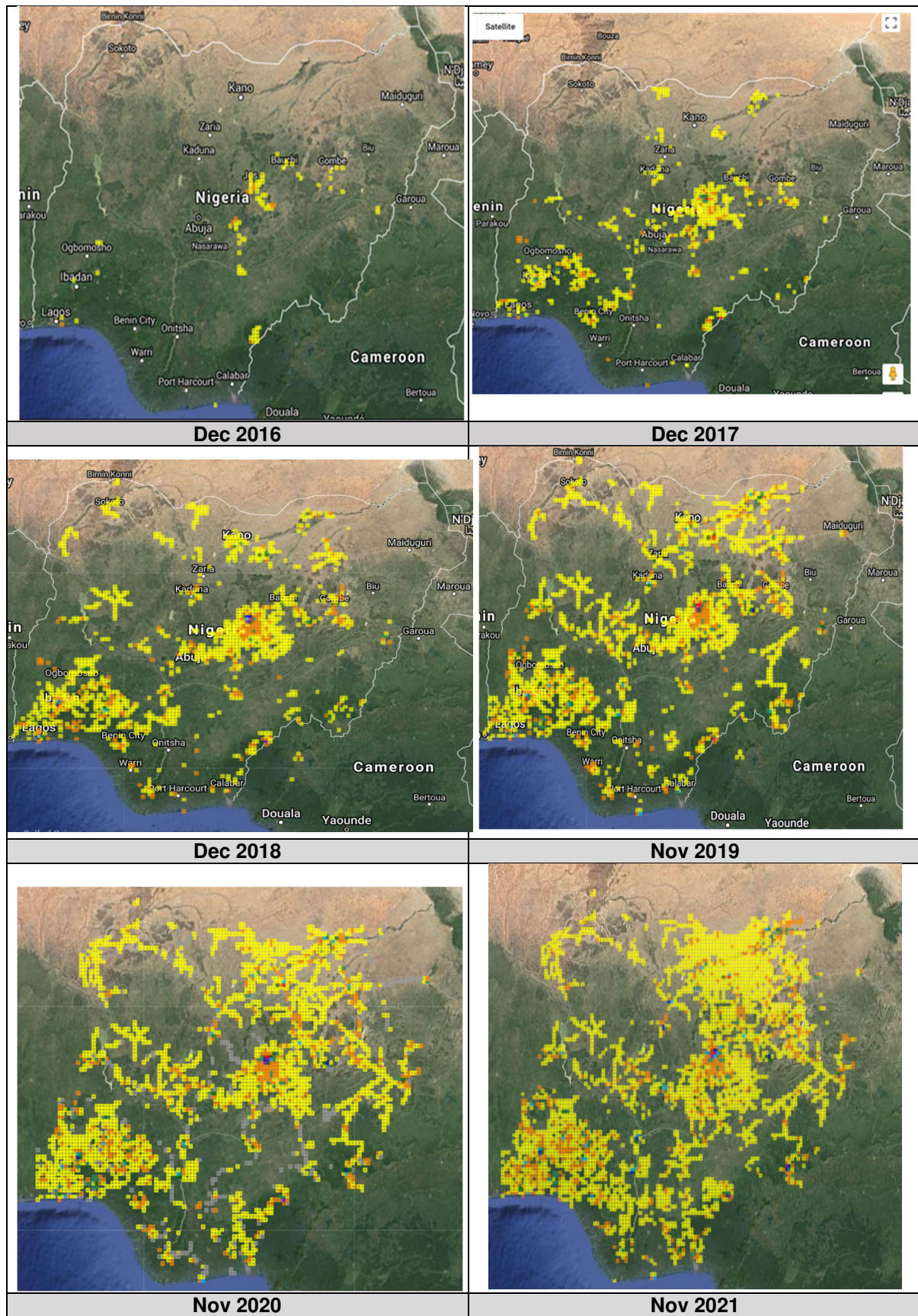


Figure 1: Continuing increase in coverage of atlased pentads since the commencement of the Nigerian Bird Atlas Project in December 2015.