

Lake Bunyonyi & Travelling by bus in Uganda

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Contact

Mathias D'haen
mathias@dhaen.be

Introduction

As a student I am currently doing research in Garamba National Park (DRC), I decided to spend my holiday in Nyungwe National Park (Rwanda) and Lake Bunyonyi (Uganda) with the objective of watching birds in these enigmatic places. Please note that it was not a hard-core birdwatching trip, in that sense that the sole target was to see as much species as possible. I did not hire birdwatching guides, nor did I had the chance of preparing myself well enough by studying all local birds or to familiarise myself with the ecology of the local endemics. Moreover did I travel around by public transport, which is very convenient, but of course not the most time-efficient.

More than describing all birds, or exact locations where I've been, I will describe the practical set-up of this trip on how I got around, the prices, and others. This to facilitate others in travelling on a similar way, as I didn't always found information on how to travel by public transport in Rwanda and Uganda.

For all my observations their exact locations I would like to direct the reader to my observado.org account: <http://tinyurl.com/zexngqm>

Please go to www.observado.org, filter on 'Mathias D'haen' and on 'Uganda' if the link would not direct you.

Please note that this report is only about the part of my trip in Uganda, look for 'Nyungwe National Park' to see the Ugandan part of my trip.

Currency

Local currency is Ugandan Shilling and a currency rate of 1USD = 3500 UGX was used.

Public transport

Uganda has a very well maintained road system with an extensive bus network (private bus companies). Travelling around by bus is something I can recommend everyone with an adventurous spirit, not wanting to pay too much and willing to socialize with locals. Prices given to tourists are the same as to local people; moreover there is no need to bargain since every price I was given seemed very honest.

I took a bus in Kigali on 17/01/17 at 8 a.m. (busses go every hour, except around midday, then less regular) in Nyabugogo bus station (ask your taxi- or motordriver for the bus station, everyone knows it). I took Jaguar Coach, but Global Coach and Trinity Coach are doing the route as well.

There is no need to book your ticket well in advance, I always bought it just half an hour, or less, in advance. After 3 hours I arrived in Kabale, where I got off the bus. There I took a taxi (20 000 UGX) to Byoona amagara parking, got in one of the free canoes to the Byoona amagara island and arrived after less than 1 hour of peddling.

(Byoona amagara has actually a very good route description on their website)

Travelling from Kabale Kampala was much less convenient. I took a motorboat from the island (25 000UGX, took me less than 15min), got dropped off at mainland, and took a motortaxi (30min). Then from Kabale I got on a bus of Getaway, which was stopping everywhere and picking up people for just a few kilometres, and thus took me 9 hours before I arrived in Kampala. I left Kabale around 8-9 a.m. and arrived around 6 p.m. in Kampala.

I travelled by bus from Kampala to Arua (ask your motordriver to go to gaaga coaches, all of them should know it), which took me around 10 hours. I travelled with gaaga coaches, but kk traveller or baby coaches are doing the route as well.

Every bus was less than 10\$.

Accommodation

I spend 3 days in Byoona Amagara, mainly to enjoy doing nothing, but I watched birds as well.

Lake Bunyonyi: Byoona Amagura (GPS: -1.300855, 29.939169); an excellent place to take holiday. I stayed two nights in my tent (4\$/night) and watched birds on the island the guesthouse was located on. Food is cheap and really good. Staff is nice. I was glad to see some tourists (after all these months).

Kampala: Fat Cat: nice backpackers hotel (15\$/night) in one of the most luxurious areas in Kampala.

Arua: Hotel hillview (55000/night). Standard but good hotel.

Visited places

Lake Bunyonyi, I only watched birds on the island (not very intensively) and a bit in the surroundings (as I was travelling through).

Birdwatching

Since it is close to the albertine rift, several endemic species occur here as well.

Observed species list

- 1 Hadada Ibis - *Bostrychia hagedash*
- 2 White-breasted Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax lucidus*
- 3 Grey Crowned Crane - *Balearica regulorum*
- 4 White-browed Coucal - *Centropus superciliosus*
- 5 Speckled Mousebird - *Colius striatus*
- 6 Pied Kingfisher - *Ceryle rudis*
- 7 Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater - *Merops oreobates*
- 8 Double-toothed Barbet - *Lybius bidentatus*
- 9 Cardinal Woodpecker - *Dendropicos fuscescens*
- 10 Tropical Boubou - *Laniarius major*
- 11 Mackinnon's Shrike - *Lanius mackinnoni*
- 12 Grey-backed Fiscal - *Lanius excubitoroides*
- 13 White-tailed Blue Flycatcher - *Elminia albicauda*
- 14 White-headed Saw-wing - *Psalidoprocne albiceps*
- 15 White-browed Robin-Chat - *Cossypha heuglini*
- 16 White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher ssp toruensis - *Melaenornis fischeri toruensis*
- 17 Bronzy Sunbird - *Nectarinia kilimensis*
- 18 Red-chested Sunbird - *Cinnyris erythrocerus*
- 19 Baglafaecht Weaver - *Ploceus baglafaecht*
- 20 Spectacled Weaver - *Ploceus ocularis*
- 21 African Pied Wagtail - *Motacilla aguimp*
- 22 Black-lored Babbler - *Turdoides sharpie*

