Background: Multidimensional poverty, which is deeply-rooted within least-developed African countries like Ethiopia, is forcing local people to heavily rely on natural resources for their subsistent livelihoods (Birdlife International, 2006). As a result, remaining wilderness areas in tropical Africa which support huge but little known biodiversity, are subject to extensive habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation in turn causing loss of plant and animal species and ecosystem services provided by them. Coffee forest fragments in the Jimma zone of Ethiopia cannot be expected to be an exception to such scenario. Taking this persistent problem into consideration, we carried out a preliminary survey of bird biodiversity in selected areas of Jimma Zone during a short term bird ringing training held from Sept. 30 to Oct. 20, 2008. The main objective of the survey was to identify and document bird species of Jimma Zone, Southwestern Ethiopia, for further in-depth studies.

Methods: Survey data were collected through exhaustive observations in and around 10 coffee forest fragments in Garuke, one fragment in Eladale, one urban area site in Jimma town and in scrubland vegetation around Gilgel Ghibe hydropower reservoir, Jimma zone, Southwestern Ethiopia. In addition, five mist-nets were employed to capture understory forest birds in two purposively selected coffee forest fragments. Mist-nets were opened at 5:50 A.M. and checked every 30 minutes until 12:00 A.M. Photos in this poster show survey team at work & some of the bird species captured.

Results & Conclusion: Over 196 bird species were identified during this survey and of these, 41 individuals belonging to 20 species were captured in Garuke and 23 individuals of 9 bird species in Eladale. Montane white-eye (Zosterops poliogastrus) followed by Olive sunbird (Nectarinia olivacea), Abyssinian slaty-flycatcher (Melaenornis chocolatinus) and Rupell’s robin-chat (Cossypha semirufa) were the most frequently captured bird species. Of the sites surveyed, Gilgel Ghibe hydropower reservoir, Jimma zone, Southwestern Ethiopia had strikingly highest bird species diversity. We approached the reservoir lake on a constant site near Bubuli Kebele (the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia) and recorded over 115 bird species within about 300 meters distance! We learnt that this area was an important and most appropriate site to see a number of migrant and resident species as well as to undertake future bird ringing activities. We believe that the result of this survey will contribute much for the preparation of a comprehensive bird species checklist for Jimma zone that could be used as an important baseline for future ornithological investigations in the area so as to promote bird conservation through ecotourism activities and in prove the livelihood of local people.

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