

News & Comment — Nouvelles & Commentaires

Ornithological services of the Niokolo-Koba National Park guides

Niokolo-Koba National Park (NKNP) in southeast Senegal is, with an area of 913,000 ha, the largest nature sanctuary in that country and one of the largest and most important in West Africa. The exceptional diversity of the fauna and flora of the Park were recognized in 1981 with its designation by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage site.

NKNP is also a key resource for local sustainable development and environmental action in the area. With the encouragement of the national and local authorities, the 31 eco-guides of the Park have been working tirelessly through their cooperative called GIE NIOKOLO <<http://www.niokolo-safari.com>> to improve and promote the Park and foster development of the region.

The wealth of bird life in and around NKNP is exceptional, estimated at about 345 species from the distribution maps of Borrow & Demey (2011, *Birds of Senegal and The Gambia*, Christopher Helm, London), without counting isolated or doubtful observations. Since 2012 the French association “COMETE International” <<http://www.comete-international.org>> has been assisting GIE NIOKOLO to improve its tourist services and to contribute more effectively to the advancement and dissemination of scientific knowledge. The guides have thus been able to organise visits to the Park and its surroundings for international groups of amateur ornithologists in 2013 and 2014 (Diop *et al.* 2014, *Malimbus* 36: 117–119; <<http://www.siteany78.org/>>), and plan a third in Senegal and Gambia in 2015. GIE NIOKOLO also offers birdwatching treks in areas of interest outside the Park, notably just north of it (near the main entrance) and in the foothills near the Guinean border to the south. Starting in November 2014, the GIE will be systematically collecting and posting data from its ornithological observations on its website, with an emphasis on raptors, water birds and species of particular interest for ornithological tourism.

To participate in sharing information on the birds of NKNP, or for questions concerning the ornithological services of GIE NIOKOLO, readers are invited to contact us.

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