

INTEREST IN, PREVENTION OF AND CONCERN FOR BIRDS AMONG WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT COLLEGE STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Birds have conservation value as significant elements of natural systems because they are responsible for insects and rodent control, plant cross-pollination and seed distribution which result in perceptible paybacks to people. This study contributes to providing insights into the interest in, prevention of and concern for birds among wildlife college students. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of 448 respondents. Primary data were obtained on respondents' characteristics and their interest in, prevention of and concern for birds through the use of a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The results showed that the mean age and family size of students were 24 years and 5 persons respectively while 62.7% of the respondents were male. The respondents have a piece of very good interest in birds (3.9), seek more prevention of birds (3.1) and have more concern for birds (3.8). Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed that there was a strong positive and significant association between college students' interest in and their prevention of birds ($r = 0.787$; $p < 0.05$), and the concern for birds ($r = 0.829$; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, the college students' prevention of birds and their concern for birds ($r = 0.943$; $p < 0.05$). Based on the results of the study, it was suggested that college students should be taught more about birds to improve their interests, increase the promotion of birds and show more concern for birds as this will assist to create a positive perception and help the students understand their roles in the fulfilment of their training as wildlife conservators.

Keywords: Nigeria, interest, prevention, concern, wildlife management, college students

INTRODUCTION

Birds are fascinating animals, with over 10,000 species worldwide. Insects and other pests are what they eat (Ceballos et al., 2020) and participating in the tree and plant pollination (Bezemer et al., 2019), farmers and gardeners particularly benefit from their ecological significance. Additionally, a lot of bird species are used by humans as food (Van et al., 2020). Spooner et al. (2018) stated that worldwide bird populations are declining. According to Hanley and Perrings (2019), this situation has prompted some nations to devote significant resources to the preservation of biodiversity in recent years. Protecting nature without raising public awareness of environmental issues is illogical (Chen, Huang and Lin, 2019). Environmental awareness is a necessary prerequisite for attitude formation, according to Ojo and Fauzi (2020). However, there isn't always a direct link between attitudes and knowledge. Bestowing to Dellsén (2018), it is crucial to note that it is debatable whether attitudes lead to increased knowledge or the other way around.

Around the world, people keep birds as pets (Alves, et al., 2013), and keeping birds is a long-standing and widespread custom. However, this practice is regarded as one of the primary causes of many species' population declines (Drews, 2001). According to Marini & Garcia (2005), species belonging to the order Passeriformes, in particular, are kept as pets in cages because of their distinct characteristics, such as beautiful plumage and/or melodious singing. In light of these developments, a comprehensive investigation of wildlife college students' interest in, concern for, and methods for preventing bird extinction is required.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted between October 2020 and April 2021 in the Federal College of Wildlife Management, New Bussa, Niger State, Nigeria. The Federal College of Wildlife Management, New Bussa was purposively selected for the study because it is the only National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) accredited institution that is specialized in Wildlife Management training in Nigeria and it is the only forest/wildlife conservation institution in West Africa as a whole. It is a National Diploma and Higher National Diploma awarding institution. The College was established in 1978. The sample frame of the study (676 students) comprised all the National Diploma (458) and Higher National Diploma (218) students in the 2020 - 2021 Academic Session in the College.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 66.27% from the total list number of 676 students in the institution to give a sample size of 448 students which was used for data analysis. Data were collected on the respondents' characteristics, interests, prevention and concern for birds among the students. The interest, prevention and concern for birds among the students construct were measured using 23 items adapted

from Prokop et al. (2008). Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type rating scale their interest, prevention and concern for birds in the environment. Data collected were subsequently subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the personal characteristics of the respondents. The mean age of the students was 23.85 years old. This implied that the respondents were young people at their youthful age. A majority (68.5%) of the students were less than or equal to 25 years old. The mean family size of the students was approximately 5 persons. A majority (71.7.1%) of the students were from a family of less than or equal to 5 persons while most of the students sampled (62.7%) are male.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of the respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age	≤ 25	307	68.5	23.85
	≥ 26	141	31.5	
Family Size	≤ 5	321	71.7	4.66
	≥ 6	127	28.3	
Sex	Male	281	62.7	
	Female	167	37.3	

Table 2 showed the interest of college students in birds. The table revealed that bird ringing is interesting to college students (4.8), they would like to go on an expedition focused on the protection of birds (4.4), do not know how someone can be interested in bird research (4.2), want more time to be spent teaching ornithology in colleges (3.9), investigating the biology of birds in the future would be of interest for them (3.8). They showed an interest in becoming an ornithologist (3.7), were not interested in why birds sing (3.6), birds have interesting life histories (3.5) and do not like natural history films about birds (3.2). The grand mean of the interest of college students in birds is 3.9 and this indicated that college students are more interested in birds.

Table 2. College Students' interest in birds

Interest in birds	Mean
Bird ringing is interesting, similar to fishing or hunting.	4.8
I would like to go on an expedition focused on the protection of birds.	4.4
I do not know how someone can be interested in bird research.	4.2
More time should be spent teaching ornithology in colleges.	3.9
Investigating the biology of birds in the future would be interesting for me.	3.8
I would like to be an ornithologist.	3.7

I am not interested in why birds sing.	3.6
Birds have interesting life histories.	3.5
I do not like natural history films about birds.	3.2
Grand Mean	3.9

Table 3 showed the prevention of birds among college students. The table revealed that the respondents do not like when powerful birds kill weaker birds (3.7) and the larger birds should be shot because they destroy the chicks of other smaller birds (3.7). They stated that larger birds are harmful because they kill smaller birds (3.6) and that the investments in birds are not profitable (3.2). Other avoiding strategies include birds should be confined in reserves to avoid troubles in cities with them (2.9) and should be shot to avoid the spread of bird influenza (2.5). Though, they agreed that even if all birds disappeared, it would not be dangerous for nature (2.1). The grand mean of prevention of college students for birds is 3.1 and this indicated that college students seek more prevention of birds.

Table 3. College Students' prevention of birds

Prevention of birds	Mean
I do not like when a powerful bird kills a weaker bird.	3.7
Larger birds should be shot because they destroy the chicks of other smaller birds.	3.7
Larger birds are harmful because they kill smaller birds.	3.6
Investments in birds are not profitable.	3.2
Birds should be confined in reserves to avoid troubles in cities with them.	2.9
Birds should be shot to avoid the spread of bird influenza.	2.5
Even if all birds disappeared, it would not be dangerous for nature.	2.1
Grand Mean	3.1

Table 4 showed the concern for birds among college students. The table revealed that the respondents stated that toxic substances from crop spraying are transferred from plants to birds and endanger them (4.8), and the natural habitats of birds are reduced by cutting trees (4.7). They agreed that bird influenza is potentially dangerous all over the world (3.9) and are curious about how birds find migratory ways (3.8), and regulate insect gradation (3.7). They were also concerned about birds living in cities can transmit diseases and endanger historical buildings (3.2), thus, keeping birds in cages is cruel (2.6). The grand mean of college students' concern for birds is 3.8 and this indicated that college students have more concern for birds.

Table 4. College Students' concern for birds

Concern for birds	Mean
Toxic substances from crop spraying are transferred from plants to birds and endanger them.	4.8
Natural habitats of birds are reduced by cutting trees.	4.7
Bird influenza is potentially dangerous all over the world.	3.9
It is interesting how birds find migratory ways.	3.8
Birds regulate insect gradation.	3.7
Birds living in cities transmit diseases and endanger historical buildings.	3.2
Keeping birds in cages is cruel.	2.6
Grand Mean	3.8

Association between interest in, prevention of and concern for birds among wildlife college students

Then again, the study further sought to establish a significant association with college student's interest in, prevention of and concern for birds. As shown in Table 5, the college students' interest in, prevention of and concern for birds are positively and significantly related. It was evident that there was a strong positive and significant association between college students' interest in and their prevention of birds ($r = 0.787$; $p < 0.05$), and likewise the concern for birds ($r = 0.829$; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, there was a strong positive and significant association between college students' prevention of birds and their concern for birds ($r = 0.943$; $p < 0.05$). This indicated that the more college students have a positive interest in birds, the higher their prevention of birds and their concern for birds and vice versa (Dayer, et al., 2019).

Table 5. Association between interest in, prevention of and concern for birds among wildlife college students

Correlations	College Students' interest in birds	College Students' prevention of birds	College Students' concern for birds
College Students' interest in birds	1		
College Students' prevention of birds	0.787*	1	
College Students' concern for birds	0.829*	0.943**	1

Note: *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that College Students have a piece of very good interest in birds, seek more prevention of birds and have more concern for birds. Therefore, there is a need to teach college students more about birds to improve their interests, reduce their prevention of birds and show more concern for birds. This will assist to create a positive perception and help them understand their roles in the fulfilment of their training as wildlife conservators. The college students should also be encouraged to conduct scientific projects with birds kept in college or their homes, and instructors may obtain multiple benefits from using the birds or other animals in the classroom.

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