

BIRDWATCHING POTENTIAL CAN HELP BOOST UGANDAN TOURISM



Eleven per cent of all birds in the world can be found in Uganda. In fact, this East African country has more species of birds per square kilometer than anywhere else in the world. It is a bird's haven where bird enthusiasts can enjoy the endangered shoebill stork, African fishing eagle and the long legged African Jacana just to mention a few. Despite the potential being enormous, a lot more needs to be done when it comes to proper marketing and

organization of birdwatching tourism.

Currently, Uganda receives 6 million dollars per year as revenue from birdwatching. However, this is just a small fraction of the revenues possible. In fact, it can be termed as a drop in the ocean.

Among other challenges, **not all tour guides know how to find the right birds in their habitats.** There are no designated routes and only a few experienced guides will assist bird enthusiasts to see the shy species. In addition, birdwatching marketing has been purely led by private operators and a lot more needs to be done.

Despite the challenges, there is some encouraging news; birdwatching enthusiasts have come up with a new mobile phone app which provides visitors with information on the arrays of bird species they will see.

This is a welcome move in the Ugandan tourism where birds are concerned. Nature parks however need to provide all the needed resources for potential visitors. Despite the long history of conflict and political turmoil in the country, **the birdwatching industry shines a ray of hope that confirms Uganda as one of the most important destinations for bird lovers.** With more effort and dedication in this sector, birdwatching is sure to put Uganda on the map for all the right reasons.

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