

Crows No More

Activity report – January 2024: Eric Kinoti

Watamu Crow Count

On 12th Jan 2024 a team of A Rocha staff and Volunteers headed to Watamu mid-afternoon. They divided into three groups, the first headed by Eric (located at Dreamland Guest House), a second by Anna (at Club Inclusive) and the third headed by Colin (at Peponi Plaza). Each group was strategically placed at a carefully chosen point to obtain the best views of crows returning to the evening roost near the police station.



One volunteer counting House Crows and the other recording.

The basic exercise is to count all crows passing each count point on their way to the night-time roost. We've found that from 5pm onwards you get a close to total count. By just before 7pm it's too dark to see more crows and the count ended by which time 9,789 crows had been counted. This is a significant rise in the number of crows counted last October which were slightly above 6,000 birds. There was also an observation that a lot of crows were young or immature which would be because the breeding season is just ending.

Malindi Counts

We carried out a count for the Malindi roost on 19th January. The team comprised of two teams one was located in Ngala Apartments which is near the Malindi Breeze Point and was headed by Kirao. The second team started on Jasmine Apartments but after c.30 minutes they were not allowed to continue and had to find an alternative at short notice! Astra Heights Apartments provided this and worked well for the rest of the count. The roost site in Malindi has expanded to include Alaskan area, towards BP petrol station and is still expanding. However, the old roost site still exist around the northern area of BP petrol station.



Team at Astra Heights, Malindi, counting crows passing by.

The team at Ngala Apartments counted 22, 287 House Crows in a period of two hours. The team that went to Jasmine and Astra heights Apartment counted 8,938 House crows. Total counts totalled to 31,115 House Crows, a significant increase from the last count of 22,305 a few years ago. The increase will also reflect that they have just finished breeding and there were therefore a lot of immature ones observed.

In Malindi this number could be nearly double as there were areas that could not be covered as well as the crows were circling around small roosting areas and many others on the coconut trees.



A map showing roosting sites (yellow area) and where the counts were done (blue dots) and where the team at Jasmine moved to.

Assessing current crow control activities

In addition, I have visited individuals around Watamu who have House Crow traps with an aim of mapping traps and collecting the data they gather into one data base for later use. The care takers write down the number of House Crows trapped and killed. This is a good data to have as it will be used to monitor success rates of the traps.



A well maintained trap with 7 trapped House Crows at Mango, House Watamu.

An example is Captain Andy's which has operated 3 traps. However, the two placed around the workshop stopped catching any crows but the one near the shops at Garoda is very active and they have been able to trap and kill 1,444 for the last year alone. I have also talked to Turtle Bay Beach Club, Watamu Cottages and Andy Adams who has his private trap in his compound. We also continuing to get their data.

What is next?

In the coming month, I will be mapping foraging sites to assess possible poisoning sites. I will start with Watamu and then assess Kilifi and Vipingo including assessing any crow work there and do counts. These are important as they will be used as poisoning areas when the pre-baiting and poisoning phase starts. We are also expecting Prof Musyoki (KWS) to hold a meeting to plan the way forward for the actual poisoning – watch this space...

Rehabilitation

On the eve of Christmas last year, a Crab-plover was brought to us very weak and dehydrated, we took care of it withh sugar solution and then introduced a diet of fish donated by Ocean Sports. The bird started recovering and after about three weeks on 15th January it was ringed and later released at Mida Creek after a full recovery.



The Crab Plover weak and dehydrated when he came and when he was released back to Mida Creek.