

Ringed Marsh Harrier from Netherlands triggers awareness of migratory birds in Mabang, Sierra Leone

Title

On 7th February 2014, a farmer called Sullay Kanu who lives in Komrabai mabela, Kolifa Mabang Chiefdom in Tonkolili District Northern Sierra Leone, captured an Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginos* on his farm (a floodplain with some water pools that contains fish and some amphibians) with a locally made snare. The rope of the snare was made from materials from palm fronds, which are processed locally to catch birds. The type of snare that was used was not clear but is locally called ??whol?.

Despite efforts by Papanie Bai-Sesay from the [Conservation Society of Sierra Leone \(CSSL\)](#) to get the bird released, the hunter refused because he was expecting to get money for the bird, more than USD 100. On 8th March 2014, Papanie Bai-Sesay and Geoffroy Citegetse (Regional coordinator for the Conservation of Migratory Birds project) made a trip to the site to release the bird. Unfortunately the bird was found dead. According to the hunter, the bird died the same morning, so they collected the rings and tags for record keeping.

Interviews with the hunters and local people shows that they hunt birds for food and sometimes sell them to others in the same village or other villages; they alleged that they sell big birds for Le 50,000 (USD 11.4 per bird).



According to them, all farmers hunt birds for different reasons; some hunt birds to protect their farms, some for food, some for money and some for secret society ceremonies (Poro society and Bondo society),

especially Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata* feathers which are used in the two societies.

Where the bird was caught, the locals were sensitized to the importance of birds and their relation to humans. The hunter understood and agreed that he will take better care of the birds and sensitize others. On the issue of birds destroying farms, it was decided to plan a meeting in the future with the locals to answer direct questions towards a more sustainable approach.

Story by Papanie Bai-Sesay (Conservation Society of Sierra Leone) **and Geoffroy Citegetse**
(BirdLife International)