ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I believe one need to be honest enough to thank genuine and esteem service rendered by the following crew members, **Mr. Jerreh Njie**, **Nyimasatou Njie**, **Mr.Dembo Kassama**, **Mr.Saikou Barrow**, **Mr.Stay S.S Sanneh, Mr.M.L Bojang, Mr.Musa Gaye, Mr.Ousman Manjang** and **Mr.Famara Touray**.

I would like to appreciation and profound gratitude goes to (Mr.**Madi Jah ICAM** 11 project Coordinator) under the Department of parks and Wildlife Management, I am grateful to my entire family (wife and kids) for giving me the time, the assistance and courage to produce this vital information for our efforts to protect and conserve biodiversity in the country and as contribution to global efforts.

BACK GROUND OF THE MONITORING

This annual report highlights monitoring activities conducted on breeding and colonial nesting birds. The number of colonial breeding birds gives indication of fish stock in that part the Atlantic coast of West Africa. This extremely important Bijol Islands provide home to water birds depending the site to breed, exploring the diverse food available, to the upwelling currents on the Atlantic coast.

INTRODUCTION

Bijol Islands from parts of the Tanji Karinti bird reserve its area of 612 square km administered by the Department of parks and wildlife management of the Gambia. This marine habitat is the main offshore islands species that take advantage of the absence of human disturbance including its abundant fish species. There are two islands, one larger and one small, joined at low tide by a sand split. Both islands are low lying with maximum evaluation of 2m water although this varies between and within seasons.

BIJOL ISLANDS BIRD BIODIVERSITY AND ECOLOGY

A Bijol island is an important area for native and migrant species. The upwelling current enriches the island with food sufficient for seabirds and marine mammal. Many sea birds occur on the island including for example kingfish plover , grey plover, kelp gull, slender bill gull, audouins gull, lesser black backed gull, bartail godwit black tail godwit, lesser skua yellow wadgetail, red shank, osprey and nest predators such as lanner falcon and Senegal coucal.

The island provides the only known nesting area in the Gambia. For grey headed Caspian tern, western Reef heron ,royal tern Barnett elal 2005,between 2006 and 2007 from 2007 to 2009 the number the species royal tern increased up to 49382 caspian tern 5257 grey headed gull 4237 and western reef heron 86. The royal tern sterna maxma increased up to 49382 pairs which is more than 35percent of the breeding population of West African region. Sub species estimated at 60,ooo to 65,000 pars wetland international 2002 other important west Africa breeding colonies is in Mauritania ca. 15000 pairs band arguim Senegal and the Gambia ca 30,000 to 40,000 pairs J veen et al 2004 laugue de barbarie delta du saloum, the bijol island and kalissaye outside the breeding season, the west African royal tern spread along the entice coast from morocco to Namibia.

THE MONITORING OBJECTIVE.

Bijol slands, monitoring programme started in 1999. Data is collected on colonial nesting bird monthly by the staff T.B.R management department of parks and wildlife management. The purpose of the monitoring is to gather information on the bird population, change of colonial nesting fish birds species change in the food availability as an indication of fish population of these sea birds.

The monitoring focus on the colonial nesting water bird, the nesting population size is determined the number of pairs nesting and the number eggs found in each nest during the breeding season. The monitoring concentrated on the grey headed gulls Caspian tern royal tern western reef heron as both resident migrant birds.

The management team visited Bijol Island on the 24 day of each month 8 to 11.30am. The main activities include counting the nest, counting the number of eggs of each species, population of species. Nest building started in January and end in August.

There are several factors which explain the size these water colonies. Like all coastal ecosystem on earth, area of Bijol Island are highly productive natural system. The huge numbers of juvenile fish significantly from the basis of food stocks available to birds.

METHODOLOGY

THE MONITORING PROCESS reflected the behavior of breeding birds during the peak of nesting based on the data obtained from January to august breeding season. The team counted and recorded the number of nest and eggs additional information on the main breeding period for the targeted species. Below is a summary of methods used.

TRANSECT COUNTING.

The grey headed gull nest mainly on the large island inside the low lying vegetation. During counting, the island is usually divided into transect of 2 to 5 meters wide. Recorder walk along the transects line and count the number of nest between transects. The recording dose not include empty nest and damaged nest. The grey headed gull nest are distance from each other for at least 2 to 5cm, the centre of the main island low lying vegetation provides suitable feeding area for kids or young ones hatchlings.

DENSE COLONY RECORDING.

The density is determined as the number of nest with eggs in a colony per m2 square indicated by corner sticks and a rope on the extreme point in the colony. The overage value obtained from four 4 sampling points is the multiplied by the actual nesting area.

EGG AND CLUTCH SIZE.

Egg size is measured by collecting eggs and measuring the length and width. Each egg is returned by counting the number of nest. Is multiplied by the number of eggs/nest.

OBSERVATION ANALYSIS OF NESTING.

Grey headed gull started nesting in early January 2009, and on the 24 January, the team recorded two nest and February 1027 were counted, the total of the season nest registered is four thousand two hundred and thirty seven 4237. This species was successful in 2009 compare to 2008. In 2009 one thousand two hundred and twenty one nests were counted on the island. This year increased about three thousand and sixteen 3016.

CASPIAN TERN.

Caspian tern nest on the sand on the main island. The nest in big colonies with a nesting distance of 10-15cm apart. This species were partially successful in 2009, they stared earlier than last year in 2009 Caspian tern in January and the team counted two hundred and twenty nine nest the whole recoded of this year was five thousand two hundred and fifty seven nest a decline of about one hundred and twenty five this eggs were not affected by floods during the breeding season.

ROYAL TERN.

In April 24 2009 they commence nesting on the main islands. This species nest on the bare sand in large colonies. They usually lay one egg per nest, nest with two or three were assumed to be laid by different females. Distance between nest approx 7-10 cm apart. The royal tern, if it happens in the early stages of laying the female did not abandon the colony, during that time they display very aggressive behavior. In 2008 17 thousand four hundred sixty nests were counted increase of twenty thousand six hundred and twenty two nests this year.

WESTERN REEF HERON.

The population of heron nesting has increased, compare to 2008, thirty seven nest were counted in 2008 while in 2009 eight six nest were registered. Its decline about forty nine nest, as per the highest recording of the previous year , is assumed that the species breeding population increased as the colony of the casuarinatree increases in shape, the same as in 2009.

OBSERVATION OF THE BREEDING ECOLOGY.

The factor responsible for decline in breeding birds in 2009 April be due flooding which occurred both islands in the course of the breeding season eroding thousand of eggs in 2005 such degradation of an area by a presence of element which disturb the normal functioning of birds impossible for any possible users . In the recent years breeding birds are known to concentrate on the main island since 2006-2009. Previously royal term and Caspian term usually utilize the small island as the main colong. This shift in habitat preference could be that some birds found other ideal breeding sites in during non breeding period, the number of species could not be recorded due lack of insufficient material (binoculars).

Conclusion

This monitoring has played a significant role in capacity building in terms of protection of conservation on the islands as a whole, it is virtually impossible to have access to conduct species recording with the absence of binoculars in non breeding season. Therefore a knowledge gap exists in the use of the GPS, Telescope and Binoculars. The monitoring surveillance and enumeration of colonial nesting birds and others on the Bijol islands should be a continuous process to enhance assessment of the breeding population as well as protection migrant species from human disturbance.

EGGS COUNTED IN EACH MONTHS ON BIJOL ISLANDS 2009

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
G.H.G		1027	1775	886	358	48	48	10
CASPIAN TERN	229	977 2910	875	258	8			
ROYAL TERN				13202	7350			
WESTERN R.H					41	13	13	4
L.T COMORANT				3				

RECOMMENDATION

Encourage and support the monitoring team, because through their effort they were able to provide information on bird on the Bijol Islands.

There is need to create opportunities for professionals training on monitoring techniques, ecological research, wetland management restoration and conservation education. DPWM to promote Royal Term as a flagship species on the Bijol Islands for wetland conservation.

REFERENCES

Barnett L.K Emms.C.and Camara, A (2001. The Birds of Bijol Island, Tanji River (karanti) Bird Reserve. The Gambia Bulletin of the African Bird clud Camara A (1998) Draft management plans for Tanji and Bijol islands Bird reserve unpublished report

Dodman, T. Beibro H.Y Flubert E and Williams E. (1999) African waterbird census 1998, Dakar, Senegal. Wetlands internation