

**MODELING AVIFAUNA RESPONSES TO MIOMBO
WOODLAND DEGRADATION IN SERENJE DISTRICT,
CENTRAL PROVINCE, ZAMBIA**

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Animal Ecology at the University of Zambia, is the result of my own original research. Where use has been made of the findings of others, it has been acknowledged in the text.

F. C. Lumbwe

Abstract

An ecological study was undertaken over a period of one and half years in miombo woodland found in Serenje District, Zambia in order to determine the extent of woodland degradation in the study area as well as determining the avifauna community structure in the study area, and how it responds to miombo woodland degradation.

Avian community structure data was obtained from bird censuses that were conducted using the point count method in 50 m radius circular plots whereas vegetation data was obtained from 0.01 ha square plots that were established within the 50 m radius circular plots.

PC-ORD[®] was used to determine plant species composition and structure from plant species presence data and DBH data of the woody vegetation in each plot. Principal Component Analysis and Cluster Analysis using SPSS[®] were used to identify the principal vegetation variables as well as grouping the sample plots along a woodland degradation gradient using the principal vegetation variables respectively. Discriminant Function Analysis using SPSS[®] was used to determine whether the sample plots were correctly classified into clusters or not. Analysis of Variance using Statistix[®] was performed on the vegetation characteristics in the different clusters in order to determine whether vegetation structure and composition was affected by woodland degradation. Cluster Analysis and PCA were used to determine bird species groupings in the study area using pooled bird abundance data. ANOVA was performed on avian species richness, avian guild richness and bird abundance in order to determine whether they were affected by woodland degradation or not. Linear regression analysis was performed on vegetation and avian variables in order to develop models that can predict avian community structure characteristics from habitat factors. Correspondence Analysis was performed on avian community structure variables and woodland status in order to determine how the bird community responds to woodland degradation.

Four miombo woodland types based on woodland degradation were identified using Cluster Analysis. These are old growth miombo, degraded old growth miombo, old regrowth miombo and young regrowth miombo. Old growth miombo was the least disturbed along the woodland degradation gradient whereas young regrowth miombo was the most degraded of the four woodland types. Discriminant Function Analysis revealed that 95.3% of the sample plots were correctly classified into miombo woodland types. Significant differences were

observed in vegetation composition and structure among different miombo woodland types. Tree height, tree size and canopy cover showed a clear decreasing trend along the woodland degradation gradient.

Sixty-seven bird species were recorded in the study area belonging to 16 dietary and foraging guilds. Cluster Analysis divided the avian community into two groups of species whereas PCA identified 22 principal components of bird species. There were no significant differences in avian species richness, avian guild richness and bird abundance among different miombo woodland types.

The linear equation for predicting avian species richness (y) from vegetation variables is:

$$y = 2.19 \text{ tree height} + 0.242 \text{ sapling density} - 2.06\text{DBH} - 0.322 \text{ total species richness} + 5.21.$$

The linear equation for predicting avian guild richness (y) from vegetation variables is:

$$y = 6.959 + 0.788 \text{ tree species evenness} - 0.952 \text{ tree species diversity} - 0.223\text{DBH}.$$

The linear equation for predicting avian abundance (y) from vegetation variables is:

$$y = 46.854 + 0.400 \text{ tree species diversity} + 0.239 \text{ sapling density} - 0.425 \text{ tree species richness} - 0.293 \text{ total species richness}.$$

Correspondence analysis between avian species and woodland status revealed that forty-four percent of the bird species correlated with old growth miombo were miombo woodland endemics while 40% of the bird species correlated with degraded old growth miombo were miombo endemics. The percentage of miombo endemics correlated with old regrowth miombo was 11.1% while young regrowth miombo was not correlated with any endemic bird species.

Woodland degradation affects the vegetation structure and species composition of miombo woodland. Miombo woodland with high vegetation structural diversity such as degraded old growth miombo and old regrowth miombo is expected to support high avian species diversity and guild diversity compared to woodland with low structural diversity such as old growth miombo and young regrowth miombo. In order to conserve the endemic miombo avifauna, there is need to protect old growth miombo while allowing low intensity harvest practices of woodland resources in order to create the spatial heterogeneity in vegetation structure that is critical for increased avian diversity.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Climatic seasons at Serenje in the Central Province of Zambia	15
Table 3.1	Rotated component matrix of ten significant vegetation variables	36
Table 3.2	Results of significance tests of Discriminant Functions	42
Table 3.3	Standardized Discriminant Coefficients of various vegetation variables	43
Table 3.4	Classification results of Discriminant Function Analysis	43
Table 3.5	Proportion of woody vegetation in three height classes and foliage height diversity in four	miombo woc
Table 4.1	Bird species correlated with various Principal Components	68
Table 4.2	Results of between habitat ANOVA of pooled avian abundance variables in different	71
Table 4.3	Results of between habitat ANOVA of avian species richness, diversity and evenness in	72
Table 5.1	Bird species correlated with different woody vegetation heights	89
Table 5.2	Bird species correlated with trees of different sizes	91
Table 5.3	Bird species correlated with woodland with different canopy cover	93
Table 5.4	Bird species correlated with trees of different vegetation heights and sizes	94
Table 5.5	Correlation between woodland status and correspondence analysis dimensions of avian	98
Table 5.6	Bird species correlated with different miombo woodland types	99
Table 5.7	Correlation between woodland status and correspondence analysis dimensions of avian	101
Table 5.8	Correlation between avian guild type and correspondence analysis dimensions of woodland	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1a	Map of the study area showing the location of Serenje District in Zambia	13
Figure 2.1a	Map of the study sites	14
Figure 2.2a	Red earths are the common soil type on the plateau in Serenje District	16
Figure 2.2b	Rocky outcrops in hill miombo in Serenje District	16
Figure 2.3a	Escarpment miombo with a ground layer dominated by <i>Nephrolepis cordifolia</i> in Serenje District	18
Figure 2.3b	Escarpment miombo with a shrub layer dominated by <i>Xerophyta equisetoides</i> in Serenje District	18
Figure 2.4a	Dambo surrounded by plateau miombo in Serenje District	19
Figure 2.4b	Sharp boundary between dambo and miombo woodland in Serenje District	19
Figure 2.5	Small circle chitemene in Kafunda area in Serenje District	21
Figure 2.6	Regrowth woodland cut for shifting cultivation in Serenje District	22
Figure 2.7a	Maize, <i>Zea mays</i> , is cultivated on the plateau in Serenje District	22
Figure 2.7b	Mango, <i>Mangifera indica</i> , and <i>Euphorbia</i> sp in an abandoned settlement in Kafunda area in Serenje District	
Figure 2.8a	Charcoal kiln ready for carbonization in regrowth woodland in Kanona National Forest	24
Figure 2.8b	Wood billets neatly packed inside a charcoal kiln	24
Figure 2.8c	Charcoal kiln being carbonized in Kafunda area	24
Figure 2.8d	Abandoned kiln in Kanona National Forest	24
Figure 2.9	Permanent woodland edges created by ZESCO power lines, Great North Road, TAZARA railway line and TAZAMA oil pipeline in Serenje District	25
Figure 3.1	The layout of transects along the Great North Road	28
Figure 3.2	Layout of study plots along a transect	29
Figure 3.3	Scatter plot of tree height and DBH of miombo woodland trees	31
Figure 3.4a	Relatively undisturbed woodland in Serenje National Forest in Serenje District	32
Figure 3.4b	Severely degraded woodland in Kanona National Forest in Serenje District	32
Figure 3.5	Regrowth miombo with evidence of a recent and old fire	33
Figure 3.6	2D Scatter diagrams representing the principal components of vegetation structure and composition among plant census plots	38
Figure 3.7	3D Scatter diagram representing the principal components of vegetation structure and composition	
Figure 3.8	Classification of plant census plots using hierarchical cluster analysis into degradation groups	40
Figure 3.9	Some phases in miombo woodland degradation and regeneration in Serenje District	41
Figure 3.10	Total plant species richness and diversity in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	44
Figure 3.11	Tree species richness and diversity in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje	

..... District	45
Figure 3.12 Sapling species richness in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	46
Figure 3.13 Stem density and sapling density in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	47
Figure 3.14 Tree size and height in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	48
Figure 3.15a Proportion of stems in four DBH size classes in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	49
Figure 3.15b Proportion of trees in three height classes in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	49
Figure 3.16 ..Tree and stand basal area cover in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	50
Figure 3.17 Woody plant canopy cover in four miombo woodland habitat types in Serenje District	50
Figure 3.18 Overview of the trend in indicators of woodland degradation in different miombo woodland types found in Serenje District	57
Figure 4.1 Community dendrogram of Euclidean distances between bird species indicating a bird abundance by species relationship in 50 census plots in Serenje District, Zambia	65
Figure 4.2 Community dendrogram of Euclidean distances between plant census plots indicating a bird abundance by species relationship in 50 census plots in Serenje District, Zambia	66
Figure 4.3 Scatter diagrams of the first eight principal components of bird species abundance	67
Figure 5.1a Caterpillars on a <i>Julbernardia paniculata</i> tree in Serenje District	80
Figure 5.1b Flowering <i>Protea angolensis</i> tree, a source of nectar in Serenje District	80
Figure 5.1c Bird nest in open vegetation in Serenje District	80
Figure 5.1d Bird nest in dense vegetation in Serenje District	80
Figure 5.2 Correspondence map of avian species occurrence and tree height	88
Figure 5.3 Correspondence map of avian species occurrence and tree size	90
Figure 5.4 Correspondence map of avian species occurrence and canopy cover	92
Figure 5.5 Correspondence map of avian guild type and tree height	95
Figure 5.6 Correspondence map of avian guild type and tree size	96
Figure 5.7 Correspondence map of avian guild type and canopy cover	97
Figure 5.8 Correspondence map of avian species occurrence and woodland status	100
Figure 5.9 Correspondence map of avian guild type and woodland status	102

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 3.1	Diagrams used for visually estimating percentage canopy cover	126
Appendix 3.2	Plant species recorded in the plant census plots in Serenje District, Zambia	127
Appendix 3.3	Correlation matrix of the principal components of vegetation structure and composition in Serenje District, Zambia and Measures of Sampling Adequacy values for each vegetation	130
Appendix 3.4	Distribution of plant census plots in different miombo woodland types in Serenje District, Zambia	130
Appendix 3.5	Structural and floristic characteristics of four miombo types in Serenje District, Zambia	131
Appendix 4.1	Bird species recorded in bird census plots in Serenje District, Zambia	132
Appendix 4.2	Bird guilds recorded in bird census plots in Serenje District, Zambia	134
Appendix 4.3	Distribution of plant census plots in different clusters based on bird abundance by species data in Serenje District, Zambia	135
Appendix 4.4	Spatial autocorrelation results for the transect data in Serenje District, Zambia	136
Appendix 4.5	Table of pooled avian variables in different habitats and in different seasons in Serenje	137
Appendix 5.1	Regression ANOVA results of various linear models for predicting avian species richness from vegetation variables	140
Appendix 5.2	Table of coefficients and collinearity statistics for linear models predicting avian species richness from vegetation variables	141
Appendix 5.3	Regression ANOVA results of various linear models for predicting avian guild richness from vegetation variables	144
Appendix 5.4	Table of coefficients and collinearity statistics for linear models predicting avian guild richness from vegetation variables	145
Appendix 5.5	Regression ANOVA results of various linear models for predicting avian abundance from vegetation variables	148
Appendix 5.6	Table of coefficients and collinearity statistics for linear models predicting avian abundance from vegetation variables	150
Appendix 5.7	Correlation between avian species occurrence and correspondence analysis dimensions of woodland status	153

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BSD	Bird Species Diversity
DBH	Diameter at Breast Height
DFO	District Forestry Officer
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FHD	Foliage Height Diversity
GMA	Game Management Area
GPS	Global Positioning System
IBA	Important Bird Area
MENR	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
MTENR	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources
PA	Protected Area
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PC-ORD	Multivariate Analysis of Ecological Data Software
PFA	Protected Forest Area
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TAZARA	Tanzania and Zambia Railways
WWF	Worldwide Wildlife Fund
ZESCO	Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation
ZOS	Zambia Ornithological Society