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Avian Pests of Cereal Crops in Rainforest and Savanna Agro-ecological Zones, Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The impacts of wildlife (especially birds) on agriculture cannot be underestimated, and result in human-wildlife conflicts. This study identified avian pests of rice and maize in two agro-ecological zones of Ondo State, Nigeria. Information gathered from informal interviews and questionnaires administered to FADAMA farmers in local communities, together with direct observations made over exploratory transects, were used to survey avian pests. A total of 27 avian pest species of rice and maize, belonging to nine families and three orders, were recorded in the two agro-ecological zones in Ondo State. In the savanna agro-ecological zone, a total of 18 avian pest species belonging to nine families and three orders were recorded, whereas in the rainforest agro-ecological zone, a total of 21 avian pest species belonging to eight families and two orders were recorded. Farmers revealed that bird damage is a serious problem which usually leads to reduction in yield, harvest quality, and interest in production. Human bird scarers and scarecrows were reported as the most effective control measures against birds' infestation and damage. There should be a synergized effort towards Integrated Pest Management involving farmers, crop scientists, and ornithologists to ensure the survival of birds in agrarian areas as well as improve crop yield. This approach will not only help farmers but also conservationists.

KEY WORDS: agriculture, agro-ecological zones, avian pests, bird damage, cereal crops, farmers, human-wildlife conflicts, Integrated Pest Management

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