



Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis

Common name: **Saddle-billed Stork**Latin name: **Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis**Local name: **ميرم، ود الميرم، طير المك، أبو ميرم**

ECOLOGY

Type:

Wild

Role in Ecosystem:

It helps maintain the balance of aquatic ecosystems. By controlling the populations of fish and other aquatic organisms, they contribute to the overall health and sustainability of wetland habitats.

HABITAT

It inhabits extensive fresh, brackish or alkaline wetlands in open, semi-arid areas and savanna with relatively high abundances of fish and with large trees nearby for nesting and roosting. It avoids deeply forested areas. Suitable habitats include shallow freshwater marshes, wet grasslands, the margins of large or small rivers, lake shores, pans and flood-plains.



Food

Carnivore

The saddle-billed stork hunts while slowly walking through flooded vegetation where it captures fish and frogs, often tossing its food into the air before swallowing it.

Its diet consists predominantly of fish 15-30 cm long up to 500 g in weight, as well as crabs, shrimps, frogs, reptiles, small mammals, young birds, molluscs and insects e.g. large water beetles, termite alates.



Movement and Communication

The Saddle-billed Stork is usually a silent species but breeding birds give descending squealing wheezes.



Social Habits

Solitary

There is no evidence that this species undertakes any regular long-distance migration. However, it is not altogether sedentary as some populations make local nomadic movements to optimum foraging habitats during periods of drought or when large rivers are in flood. Breeding starts late in the rains or in the dry season, timed so that the young fledge at the height of the dry season when prey is concentrated and easier to obtain. The species nests in solitary pairs and usually remains solitary when not breeding, although it may occur in small family parties or in groups of up to 12 individuals.



Reproduction

Oviparous

The nest is a large flat platform of sticks placed up to 20-30m in a tree near water isolated from other trees and sources of disturbance. It may also nest on cliffs and in the abandoned nests of other bird species.

The female lays one to five (typically two or three) white eggs weighing about 146 g (5.1 oz) each. It does not form breeding colonies and is usually found alone or in pairs. The incubation period is 30-35 days, with another 70-100 days before the chicks fledge, with the young often remaining in the parents' territory until the next breeding season.



Attributes



Size

This is a huge bird that regularly attains a height of 145 to 150 cm (4 ft 9 in to 4 ft 11 in), a length of 142 cm (4 ft 8 in) and a 2.4 to 2.7 m (7 ft 10 in to 8 ft0).

Weight

The male of the species is larger and heavier than the female, with a range of 5.1-7.52 kg (11.2-16.6 lb), with a mean mass of 6.38 kg (14.1 lb). The female is usually between 5 and 6.84 kg (11.0 and 15.1 lb), with a mean mass of 5.95 kg (13.1 lb).

INTRODUCTION

The Saddle-billed Stork is a huge, solitary bird inhabiting large swamps and river valleys.

It is a black-and-white stork with a very long tricoloured bill (red and black with yellow saddle and two small pendulous yellow or red wattles), and very long grey legs with pink 'knees' and feet. The male has dark eyes, while the slightly smaller female has yellow eyes. In flight its massive wings are mostly white with black coverts. The fledgelings are largely dingy grey-brown with some white patches on their back, blackish bill without saddle, and duller legs.

LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

Human interaction

No information available.

Cultural value

The Sudanese local name "Mairum" indicates a high status among other bird species, as the word "mairum" means the queen or strong woman. The other name "Wad Almak" means the son of the king. In northern Sudan, describing its bill is called "Um maiber". "Maiber" is a long upholstery needle.

Cultural expression

No information available.

THREATS

The species is vulnerable to disturbance and to wetland degradation (e.g. pesticide contamination) and conversion to agriculture.

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