

Coping with the new normal

We have reluctantly changed our way of life. Masks are normal. Physical distancing is a must. Public transport is different. A cough or a sneeze is viewed differently. Gatherings are being re-assessed. This new normal is not just going away. Kenya's Covid-19 situation is worsening. The world over, virtual meetings—zoom, skype, teams – have stepped in the place for physical meetings.

Like others, Nature Kenya is adapting. Some activities remain postponed, others that had been postponed may be possible within new approaches while other work continues as follows:

1. The 110th Annual General Meeting will take place by zoom on 19th August 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. See separate announcement and link to the meeting.
2. Members will receive an electronic version of the *Nature Net* until further notice
3. Some museums and sites are expected to re-open soon. All visitors will observe new access protocols including sanitatising and wearing masks.
4. The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks have been postponed further, probably until September. There may be changes to the format. Updates will be published in the September Nature net.
5. Sunday bird walks and other field trips and talks remain suspended until further notice. You will be informed as soon as they resume.
6. The 'Lungs for Kenya' Charity Golf Tournament 2020 is re-scheduled for Friday, October 2nd, 2020 at the Karen Country Club.
7. The Membership office and shop is closed until further notice. Membership recruitment and renewal however continues. Visit <http://naturekenya.org/support/membership/> and use cashless payment options such as M-Pesa or credit/debit cards. Your membership cards will be processed and mailed to you.
8. As long as the main office remains open part of the time, members may also buy Arabuko-Sokoke honey. Pay by M-pesa and arrange a time to collect the honey. Ring the bell at the entrance of the office behind the galleries.

Staff have continued to optionally work from home. Support staff are on paid leave. On site conservation actions by field staff and Site Support Groups across 26 sites has continued despite the Covid-19 disruptions:

Restoration

In South Nandi forest, 32,000 indigenous tree seedlings were planted by Kimondi Community Forest Association. Along river Nzoia in Yala, 22,972 indigenous tree seedlings were planted on lower River Yala Riparian zone while 20,480 trees were planted on community farms. Around Mt. Kenya, 37,888 trees were planted at degraded sites; the Ngaya CFA planted 5,000 trees to replace dead seedlings planted in October and November 2019; monitoring and verification of all restoration sites planted (110ha) and maintained (370ha) was completed by field staff; and two Restoration Action Plans for Chuka and Kiera CFAs were drafted.



Saving Species

Site Support Groups continued to undertake community-led detailed IBA monitoring: Friends of Dunga conducted bird monitoring around the flooded Hippo Point; Maasai Mara Wildlife Ambassadors carried out vulture monitoring at Naboisho Conservancy to mark World Environment Day; Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA) conducted forest patrols in Arabuko-Sokoke forest; Sabaki River Conservation Development Organization (SARICODO) conducted IBA monitoring at the Sabaki River mouth and recorded mangrove destruction; detailed monitoring of Clarke's Weaver and Taita Apalis took place in Dakatcha Woodland and Taita Hills, respectively; and 20 transects were surveyed for Common Bird Monitoring in Arabuko Sokoke Forest. Draft Kenya Vulture Safe Zone designation guidelines were developed; 20 SSGs conducted rapid assessments and common bird monitoring at their IBAs and awareness creation to the local community members on the Covid-19 pandemic; and proposals to be submitted to the Save Our Species (SoS) call for proposals drafted by the Species and Sites Manager (Paul Gacheru).

Policy and Advocacy

Nature Kenya provided input into key policy processes including: budget tips to the Cabinet Secretary, National Treasury and Planning, for consideration while preparing the financial year 2020/21 budget statement; Kenya Development Bank bill 2020; Nakuru County Budget estimates for 2020/2021 financial year; and Nairobi National Park (NNP) Draft Management Plan 2020-2030 – new version. Dr Paul Matiku joined eminent personalities in a webinar discussing World Environment Day.

Local Empowerment

Fifteen SSGs participated in World Environment Day celebrations in June 2020; Yala Ecosystem Site Support Group (YESSG), Yala Planning Advisory Committee and Nature Kenya staff carried out awareness on the Yala Swamp land use plan and its implementation through a live radio talk show on Bulala FM with a session every week. In conservation farming and climate smart agriculture in Yala, 366kg of assorted vegetables was harvested, and a fish and chicken feed processing machine installed with electricity. To help SSGs cope with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Local Empowerment Manager (Joel Siele) initiated the development of a proposal to be submitted to the BIOPAMA Rapid Response Grant.

Moving Forward

Nature Kenya will continue to update you on further developments. Threats remain to species and habitats, and conservation work must go on. Please continue to support Nature Kenya, and to observe and enjoy nature from wherever you are. For any clarification or to report your observations on species and sites, kindly contact us through email: office@naturekenya.org or telephone: 020 3537568, 0780 149200, 0751 624312, 0771 343138

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