



Patricia prepares to plant trees at Kereita forest (left), and knitting a scarf at home (right). PHOTOS: COURTESY



## Cut one, plant two

BY PATRICIA OWIYO

One of the results of deforestation is global warming. Trees and plants take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen back into the air. When we cut trees, a lot of the carbon dioxide released finds its way into the atmosphere. The carbon combines with other gases and absorbs sunlight. Normally, the radiation is supposed to escape into space but these gases, which last up to centuries, trap the heat in the atmosphere and causes the planet to get hotter. This is known as the greenhouse effect.

At St. Andrews Preparatory School, Turi, we are always encouraged to do something that would benefit the community, so I decided to plant some trees to help reduce the amount of deforestation and its impacts on our atmosphere. At school, we have a program called 'Love in Action'. As part of this program, we eat simple lunches and wear our home clothes. We also contribute Ksh.100 from our tuck money to give to the people in need at the school's charity, the Turi Children's Project.

We also try and reduce, if not eliminate, food wastage. With less wastage, there would be less need for more land for agriculture. This would reduce deforestation. More land would also be available for the planting of trees.

People also cut down trees for fuelwood for

cooking and to make homes warm. Trees also provide timber used for furniture and building. This means that we need to use trees sustainably, by planting as much as or more than we cut down. That's why I decided to be part of the solution and plant trees, not of the problem by cutting them down.

Because of their many uses, we cannot stop cutting down trees completely. For that matter, for every tree we cut down, we should plant one or two in return. That way, we will continue to use trees sustainably for timber and fuelwood. That way, we will have a win-win situation.

*Patricia Owiyo is a budding 11-year-old naturalist who is on a mission to conserve Kenya's forest. Patricia is a pupil at St. Andrew's Preparatory School Turi, Nakuru. The disruption of the school calendar by the Covid-19 pandemic made her come up with an initiative to grow trees in degraded forests. Patricia funds her tree-growing activities from savings made from sales of her handicrafts. Last month Patricia donated 400 tree seedlings to the Kijabe Environmental Volunteers (KENVO) for planting in Kereita forest, Kikuyu escarpment. Through friends, Patricia was also linked to Nature Kenya for support and guidance in her dream journey to grow at least 1,000 trees by 2021.*

### REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS BIOLOGY COURSE



VENUE: Invertebrate Zoology Laboratory, Nairobi National Museum  
This course has been organized by the Kenya Herpetofauna Working Group

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Registration payment can also be made through Mpesa:  
Business number 100300, Account name Reptile Course 2021



## Stuck with Covid-19

In April 2020, Covid-19 seemed like just a passing disruption. In September, there was a temporary reprieve when the positivity was consistently less than 5%. In October, the Government's directives to control Covid-19 were relaxed a little, with schools partially re-opening. In November, the number of Covid-19 cases and positivity increased and Kenya seems to be in a second wave. Vaccines promise a way out of the pandemic, but it may take a long time.

In the past few months, Nature Kenya has been able to deliver more conservation action, including advocacy at the national and county level and working with communities to protect sites and species and sustain livelihoods. However, the risks of catching Covid-19 are still very high. Some activities remain postponed and some may be postponed further as new ones are started:

1. Members will receive an electronic version of the January Nature Net in December.
2. Occasional outings may be announced through the Nature Net, the Nature Kenya website or by e-mail. Transport will not be provided. Wednesday morning birdwalks, Sunday bird walks, field trips and in-person talks remain suspended until further notice. Virtual talks through Zoom may be announced by e-mail.
3. The Membership office and shop is closed until further notice. Membership recruitment and renewal 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 e-mailed to you for you to print or keep in your phone. Laminated hard copy cards will only be produced on request.
4. Members may also buy Arabuko-Sokoke honey or books. Pay by M-pesa (Pay bill 100300, account "Honey" or "Books"). Collect them on Mondays or arrange another time to collect the honey or books. Ring the bell at the entrance of the office behind the galleries.
5. The 'Lungs for Kenya' Charity Golf Tournament 2020 has been tentatively moved to a date in March 2021.
6. The Museums and sites are open to the public under Ministry of Health guidelines (as at 30 November 2020).

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 clarifications or to report your observations on species and sites, kindly contact us through email: [office@naturekenya.org](mailto:office@naturekenya.org) or telephone: 020 3537568, 0780 149200, 0751 624312, 0771 343138

**Dr. Paul Matiku,**  
Executive Director, Nature Kenya – the East Africa Natural History Society



**A Hooded Vulture, one of the Critically Endangered vulture species found in Africa.** PHOTO: LORENZO BARELLI

## Birds provide hopeful message on targets to save nature

BY JESSICA LAW

*You may have heard about the world's catastrophic failure to meet global biodiversity targets. But there's hope. A new landmark report from BirdLife International uses bird conservation successes to outline recommended solutions that could help the next set of targets to succeed.*

BirdLife International recently released a report, *Birds and Biodiversity Targets*, which builds on the recent coverage of the world's catastrophic failure to meet global targets to save biodiversity. While there is plenty of doom and gloom around this subject, there have also been numerous successes over the past decade that demonstrate how achievable – and affordable – nature conservation can be with sufficient political investment.

*Birds and Biodiversity Targets*, part of our flagship *State of the World's Birds* series, uses our extensive global research to provide a road map to ensure the 2020s are not just another "lost decade for nature". As well as outlining the shortfalls of each of the targets, this publication also brings a message of hope to the world, using bird conservation successes to show that solutions exist for the problems facing the biosphere, and that nature can recover swiftly when these are enacted.

The report aims to dispel the idea that the governments failed because the targets were unachievable, outlining the actions needed to plot a course where, by 2050,

nature and humanity can live in harmony.

Key successes over the past decade include:

- Some of the most critical sites for conservation of birds – Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas – have been formally recognised as protected areas, with their average coverage increasing from 43% to 46% since 2010.
- Conservation has prevented up to 48 extinctions and slowed the rate at which species are moving towards extinction by 40% over recent decades.
- Measures to prevent accidental 'bycatch' of seabirds in fisheries have virtually eliminated albatross deaths in the South African hake trawl fishery.
- Community efforts to tackle the hunting of birds have been spectacularly successful in some locations, for example ending the capture of >100,000 Amur Falcons each year in Nagaland, India.

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Based on insights from their work, their recommendations include:

- The new targets should be more ambitious, for example conserving all Key Biodiversity Areas, halting human-induced extinctions and recovering native species abundance to 1970s levels by 2050.
- The new targets need a clear, communicable, overarching aim – comparable to the Paris Agreement's goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.
- Targets need to be SMART - specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic and time-bound – and each target should be broken down into clear steps outlining how it can be met.
- Climate change targets should promote nature-based solutions (e.g. forests as carbon sinks) which support both nature and people.
- Targets on health and wellbeing should focus on access to blue and green spaces. [Read the full report here](#)



Threatened bird species that have directly benefitted from resources mobilised from companies and individuals enrolling as BirdLife Species Champions to support nature conservation. Orange circles indicate approximate centre of species' breeding range or location of projects supported.

SOURCE: BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

## Great Conjunction

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

### Planets Dec '20

The planets Jupiter and Saturn are far from each other as they orbit around the sun. On December 20 and 21, however, they will be lined up so as to look like one bright light, as seen from Earth. It's called a great conjunction.

Watch bright Jupiter and smaller Saturn draw closer to each other every day in the western sky (above the sunset). Jupiter is lower until December 20; then the two planets pass each other, and Saturn is lower from December 22.

Across the sky, high in the east, the "red planet" Mars still appears almost as bright as Jupiter. The crescent moon is near Jupiter and Saturn on December 17; and the waxing moon is near Mars on the 23rd.

Venus is bright above the sunrise in the pre-dawn sky. The waning crescent moon is near Venus on December 13.

### Meteors

In early December, the Earth travels through an area of dust and rocks in space. Some of these particles may fall into the earth's atmosphere and burn up. We call them meteors or "shooting stars" (although they are not stars). Look for the Geminids meteor shower on a dark, clear night between midnight and dawn from Dec 7 to 17, especially early on the 14th.

### Moon, Dec 2020

Dec 8 – last quarter (half-lit moon at dawn). Dec 14 – new moon. Dec 21 – first quarter (half-lit moon at sunset). Dec 30 – full moon.

### December stars

The distinctive constellation of Orion, the Hunter or Warrior, rises due east on December evenings, climbing higher each night. Look for three bright stars in a row, with four bright stars like a box around them. To the Aymara people of highland South America, the three stars in a row were a celestial bridge – and indeed, they seem to link the skies of the Southern and Northern hemispheres.

North (left) of Orion, the stars of the Hyades cluster form a shape like the letter V. The reddish star Aldebaran, the fiery eye of the constellation Taurus the bull, is at the open end of the "V". Further north, several bright stars are grouped close together – the Pleiades or Seven Sisters of Greek myths. With binoculars, you can see more stars and a glowing blue haze. The moon is near the Pleiades on December 26, near Aldebaran on the 27th.

As the year ends, Sirius, the brightest star we can see at night, rises southeast of Orion. Canopus, the second brightest star, appears further to the south. The star Fomalhaut is high in the southwest, and below it the bright star Achernar is still prominent in the south.

### Sun

On the solstice, December 21, the sun is at its furthest point south. Here on the equator we may not notice this, but you will notice that the sun rises and sets later each day. Sunrise and sunset are half an hour later at the end of January than they were in November. 🌅

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## Birding Updates

Enjoy birds and other wildlife and stay safe during the holidays!

**Mombasa Birdwalks** are held the 3rd Saturday of each month. To check meeting time and place, check Facebook page: <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>>

Or contact:

Taibali Hamzali <[thamzali@gmail.com](mailto:thamzali@gmail.com)> / 0733-980540;

or Doris Schaule <[dorischaul@gmail.com](mailto:dorischaul@gmail.com)> / 0722-277752

**Wednesday Morning Birdwalks** and other Nature Kenya field trips are still postponed. A few outings to wetland sites may be arranged in January or February to support the African Waterfowl Counts - but no transport will be provided. Members will be informed through the January Nature Net, the website or by e-mail.

Bird-watching is safe - we encourage you to go out birding with friends in your local area and send your records to:

**Kenya Bird Map** <<http://kenya.birdmap.africa/>>

If you have questions re KBM, write to <[kenyabirdmap@naturekenya.org](mailto:kenyabirdmap@naturekenya.org)>

### Online birding:

- Wings Over Kenya Facebook page
- "The Safari Naturalist" on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCajjLtyL9G6mJ20AajwIRLxA>
- "The Safari Naturalist" blog website: <https://www.thesafarinaturalist.com/virtual-birding-tours/>
- Ndege Wetu (14-part blog series on the birds of Kenya) <<http://www.shotsbyshema.com/category/ndege-wetu/>>
- BirdLife International and eBird

To stay updated with the birding scene in Kenya, sign in to the new Kenyabirdsnet platform on Google Groups at: <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/kenyabirdsnet>



The office will remain closed from 23rd December 2020 and re-open on 5th January 2021.

## Yes! Start my NatureKenya membership

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### MEMBERSHIP TYPES

<i>Ksh Per Year</i>	
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Family	2,800
Student	1,200
Schools, Clubs	1,500
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