



Butterfly farmer Abbas Athman PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET

How butterflies protect Arabuko-Sokoke Forest

BY CAROLINE CHEBET

March 3 is World Wildlife Day. The day was set aside by the United Nations (UN) to celebrate and raise awareness of wild animals and plants. “Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet” is this year’s theme. The theme highlights the central role of forests, forest species and ecosystems services in sustaining the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people globally, and particularly of indigenous and local communities with historic ties to forested and forest-adjacent areas.

“It is all about the trees, the butterflies and my sweep net. The trees bring the butterflies and these butterflies earn me a livelihood,” says Abbas Athman, an Arabuko-Sokoke forest-adjacent dweller.

Athman has mastered the patience, calmness and agility to dart and flit with butterflies in one of the most rewarding businesses in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest: butterfly farming. He can tiptoe, then dart just like the butterflies before bringing them down with a swoop of his net. For 15 years, a sweep net and several indigenous trees dotting his compound are among his precious investments.

Athman neighbours Arabuko-Sokoke forest, the largest remnant of coastal forest in East Africa and a

home to many endangered species, a reason why conservation of the forest is critical. However, pressure from the growing population in tandem with the soaring demand for wood fuel and building materials placed the forest in danger.

Enter the butterflies, unlikely saviours. The butterfly export project, which started in 1993 as an initiative by Nature Kenya and the National Museums of Kenya to conserve the forest, has brought together hundreds of farmers living around Arabuko-Sokoke forest. While conserving the critical ecosystem, the project boosts the livelihoods of farmers from across 50 villages around Arabuko-Sokoke who, in a good season, can each earn up to Ksh 15,000.

In the butterfly project, farmers trap adult butterflies and keep them in transparent cages made from nets. Within these cages are different types of trees, which are food for the caterpillars that will become butterflies.

The butterflies lay eggs, which hatch into larvae – caterpillars. The caterpillars feed on the leaves of forest trees, and grow until they turn into pupae. A pupa is a resting stage. Inside the pupa, the caterpillar changes into a butterfly.

Butterfly farmers collect the pupae and bring them to the Kipepeo office, where the farmers are paid for each pupa. The pupae are then exported to different countries where they become part of live butterfly exhibitions.

Exporting pupae does not reduce the butterfly species within the forest, since a butterfly can lay up to 120 eggs. Farmers usually have butterflies in excess and often release them.

The project, Nature Kenya’s Coast Regional Coordinator Francis Kagema said, has helped ease cases of destruction in Arabuko-Sokoke.

“The project has demonstrated to communities the importance of these forests and whenever there are cases of destruction, it is the communities who tip authorities on the case. The project has also demonstrated the importance of growing indigenous trees, a move which has boosted forest cover in the region,” Kagema said.

Protecting the trees for the butterflies has been key in conservation of endemic and endangered species of Arabuko-Sokoke, says Paul Gacheru, Nature Kenya species expert. The forest, he says, hosts six of the rarest and globally threatened bird species including Clarke’s (Kilifi) Weaver, Amani Sunbird, East Coast Akalat, Spotted Ground Thrush, Sokoke Pipit and Sokoke Scops Owl. Arabuko Sokoke is also home to the unique Golden-rumped Sengi (elephant-shrew), over 230 bird species and 250 butterfly species.

Last year when Covid-19 struck, butterfly exhibits closed all over the world, and exports stopped suddenly. Nature Kenya and some of its members provided funds to support the butterfly farmers with small loans and seeds to grow food. This helped them through the worst of the pandemic, and now butterfly exhibits are opening again – including Butterfly House at Fort Jesus, Mombasa. 🦋

111TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

DATE: Wednesday 19th May 2021

TIME: 10:00 AM - Noon

VIA: Zoom virtual meeting

The Agenda

1. Minutes of the 110th Annual General Meeting
2. Matters arising from the Minutes
3. Chairman’s Report
4. Honorary Treasurer’s Report
5. Appointment of Auditor
6. Any other business of which due notice in the form of the Resolution to be proposed has been given to the Honorary Secretary, signed by not less than 2 members, not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting
7. Election of Office Bearers, Members of the Executive Committee and Trustees. Nomination forms for officers or members of the Executive Committee are available from nkmembership@naturekenya.org

To register for the virtual AGM in advance, please click [here](#).

The environment is getting more attention

Nature Kenya is glad to see that climate change and biodiversity are getting more attention from world leaders and business decision-makers. What is needed now is to translate words into action, in Kenya and worldwide.

Meanwhile, Covid-19 is still here! It will take some time for protective vaccines to reach everyone. We remain hopeful and careful – wearing masks, washing hands and working from home when we can. Nature Kenya conservation efforts continues locally and nationally.

March 2021:

1. The 111th EANHS Annual General Meeting will be held virtually on 19th May 2021 from 10 a.m by Zoom. Nomination forms for the Executive Committee are available by e-mail.
2. Wednesday Morning Birdwalks have resumed. See back page for details.
3. The Nature Kenya office is closed. However, membership can be renewed online <http://naturekenya.org/support/membership/> or via M-pesa. Books, honey, etc. may be purchased online or with M-pesa and collected on Mondays or by arrangement. Ring the bell at the entrance of the office behind the galleries.
4. The 'Lungs for Kenya' Charity Golf Tournament has been moved to 16th April 2021 at the Karen Country Club. Book your slot to participate by contacting Gloria Waswa, Membership and Marketing Manager at nkmembership@naturekenya.org or telephone 0726 134029.
5. Members will continue to receive an electronic version of the Nature Net
6. The EANHS/NMK Library is open. Museum galleries and sites are open to the public under Ministry of Health guidelines (as at end February 2021).

Please support us as we work towards a greener future!

For clarifications 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

Dr. Paul Matiku,

Executive Director, Nature Kenya – the East Africa Natural History Society

Indigenous and Community Conserved Area to Safeguard Critical Ecosystems and Livelihoods in Yala Swamp

BY EMILY MATECHE

"It's not enough to talk about development, what is the benefit of development to local communities? It's about identity, it's about ownership, it's about rights, it's about access, it's about representation, it's about involvement in decision making, it's about values derived from wise use of resources, it's about fairness and equity in distribution of benefits accrued from investments, it's about taking charge to ensure sustainability, most of all, it's about perpetuating our heritage," said Thomas Achando, the recently elected Chairperson of the Yala Swamp ICCA management committee who also sits in the Luo Council of Elders.

Yala Swamp, located on the north-eastern shore of Lake Victoria, is a Key Biodiversity Area and a proposed Ramsar site – a wetland of international importance. For thousands of fisherfolk and farming communities who depend on it, it's their "gold", as they fondly call it. Over the last few decades, there has been a significant decline in the abundance of natural resources due to a number of threats, including over-exploitation, encroachment, habitat degradation, climate change and high levels of poverty.

Through a multi-stakeholder approach, Nature Kenya worked with local communities and the Siaya and Busia county governments to develop a Land Use Plan (LUP) to balance the various interests and address the threats to the wetland. To kick start the implementation of the LUP, multi-agency stakeholders with support from Nature Kenya established an 8,404ha Indigenous and Community Conserved Area (ICCA) at the heart of Yala Swamp.

The ICCA constitutes natural areas surrounded by open-access farming and grazing land, riverine forest and papyrus wetland. Guided by a management plan with technical backstopping from the government, the ICCA will be managed for multiple-use for the benefit of important cultural values and biodiversity, as well as ecotourism, farmers, livestock herders, fisherfolk and island dwellers. The ICCA will guarantee a continued flow of ecosystem services to enable production and ensure development overall is sustainable.

"Those are the striking features about the Yala Swamp ICCA model. I'm happy to take up leadership that will deliver the vision for local inhabitants of Yala Swamp through a balanced all-inclusive approach", says Achando.

Meanwhile, Yala Ecosystem Site Support Group, the local community conservation champions,

have intensified awareness campaigns to rally support for the LUP and ICCA through chief's barazas and on vernacular radio station Bulala FM, in Budalang'i, Busia County. The forums have been quite instrumental for community members to ask questions, seek advice and clarification and allay fears held by local community members.

"When I received news about a meeting from my village elder with the agenda being our swamp, I was disturbed. Issues concerning Yala swamp have always been jinxed, from history, so I hardly slept at night. I was anticipating the worst, my intuition told me that we were going to lose our rights to access land for subsistence farming, because who cares about the vulnerable?" said one elderly woman from Usonga, Siaya county, during a sensitization meeting at Mlambo village in early January 2021.

"We are thankful for the information we've been provided with. Through the Land Use Plan we have a roadmap to finding lasting solutions for issues affecting Yala swamp. I can't wait for the County Assemblies to give their nod of approval for the Yala Swamp Land Use Plan," added the elderly woman.

To enhance ownership of biodiversity conservation at the village level, Nature Kenya is supporting formation of Village Natural Resource and Land Use Committees (VNRLUCs) in all the swamp-adjacent villages. VNRLUCs will facilitate governance, conservation and development actions and diversify sustainable livelihoods in line with the ICCA model. 🌱



A section of the Yala Swamp.
PHOTO: JOHN MWACHARO

For updates visit
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FLOWERING: Blooming coffee flowers in Limuru.
PHOTOS: PETER USHER



RESTORATION: Community members in Mpozi, Tana River Delta sort out tree seeds they collected for planting. Nature Kenya kicked off a tree seed collection exercise in Tana as part on an ongoing landscape restoration project supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). PHOTO: GEORGE ODERA

March 2021 Evening Sky

■ BY FLEUR NG'WENO

Look up when the sky has become dark, on an evening with few or no clouds: Sirius, the brightest star of the night sky, is high above, towards the south. Canopus, the second brightest star, is lower in the south.

The ancient Greeks gave names to the patterns that the stars form in the sky, called constellations. Face south (towards Sirius) and look overhead. The constellation of Orion, the Hunter, is striding across the sky, as the ancient Greeks saw him ([See February Nature Net](#)).

The Hunter is followed by his hunting dogs: Sirius the Dog Star, and to the left (northeast) Procyon the little dog. You can imagine Sirius as the dog's bright eye, and the stars just below as forming his body, feet and tail.

Turn around to look north. Below and left (west) of Orion, the Pleiades and Hyades star clusters are dipping towards the west. To the ancient Greeks, the cone-shaped Hyades cluster was the face of Taurus the bull. The red star Aldebaran, at the base of the cone shape, was the bull's fiery eye.

This year, there is another red light of about the same brightness nearby – the planet Mars. Mars now appears much less bright than it was last year. In the first week of March, Mars seems to be close to the Pleiades. The crescent moon is near Mars – and not far from Aldebaran – on March 19.

Further north is the pentagon-shaped constellation Auriga, with its bright star Capella. High in the north, between Auriga and Procyon, is the constellation Gemini – two sets of two stars. The waxing moon is near the bright star Pollux in Gemini on March 23.

Now turn to look east, with your back to the sunset. The constellation Leo the Lion is

high in the east. Imagine the bright star Regulus as the lion's heart; and the line of stars next to it, shaped like a half circle, as the lion's head and mane. The moon is near Regulus on March 25.

On a clear night away from city lights, you may see the Milky Way stretching like a pale ribbon across the sky, past Sirius, Orion, Gemini and Auriga. It is our galaxy, made up of millions of stars, including our sun.

The names given above are from ancient Greek, Arab and Roman astronomers, and used in English today. Other cultures all over the world have other names and stories for the stars and planets.

Morning Sky

After Orion has set in the west, the Scorpion rises in the southeast, and crawls across the southern sky. Alpha Centauri, third brightest star at night, is in the southwest.

Three planets are low in the eastern sky above the sunrise. Saturn is highest, bright Jupiter lower. At the start of March little Mercury is between Saturn and Jupiter, but Jupiter rises past it on the 5th and Mercury drops back towards the horizon. The waning crescent moon is near Saturn and Jupiter on March 10, near Jupiter and Mercury on the 11th.

Moon, Mar 2021

March 6 – last quarter; half-lit moon overhead at dawn.
March 13 – new moon; look for a slender crescent above the sunset on the 14th.
March 21 – first quarter; half-lit moon overhead at sunset.
March 28 – full moon, rising in the east.

March sun

March 20 is the equinox – when day and night are of equal length, all over the world. For us near the equator, it means the sun will be in the north during the day, until the September equinox. ☀

LUNGS FOR KENYA

11TH CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

DATE: 16TH APRIL 2021 | VENUE: KAREN COUNTRY CLUB | TIME: 8:30AM

MAIN SPONSOR: KSH. 1,000,000 - 3,000,000 | GOLD SPONSOR: KSH. 500,000
SILVER SPONSOR: KSH. 250,000 | BRONZE SPONSOR: KSH. 100,000 | HOLE SPONSOR:
KSH. 50,000 | INDIVIDUAL PLAYER: KSH. 2,500 (NK MEMBER), KSH. 3,000 (NON
MEMBER) | TEAM ENTRY KSH. 10,000

To register contact Gloria: nkmembership@naturekenya.org or telephone 0726134029

Birding Updates

Wednesday Morning Birdwalks are on again, led by Richard Kipng'eno and Peter Muriithi. In March, participants will meet at the designated venue. Please observe Covid-19 protocols: No sharing of binoculars and guidebooks and no pooled transport. Masks are a must.

Birdwalks take place rain or shine. However, in case of extremely heavy rain in Nairobi, the birdwalks will revert to the Nairobi National Museum grounds.

Wednesday 3rd March, 2021 - Nairobi Arboretum. Meet at 8:30 am at the main entrance off State House Road.

Wednesday 10th March, 2021 - Museum Grounds/Michuki Memorial Park. Meet at 8 am in the plaza in front of the entrance to the museum galleries.

Wednesday 17th March, 2021 - Paradise Lost. Meet at 8:30 am at the turning to Paradise Lost in the coffee. Thanks to the management for welcoming the birdwalk.

Wednesday 24th March, 2021 - Karura Forest. Meet at the Limuru Road entrance, Gate A, at 8:30am. We will then proceed to Amani parking. Thanks to Friends of Karura Forest for welcoming the birdwalk.

Wednesday 31st March, 2021 - Museum Grounds/Michuki Memorial Park. Meet at 8 am in the plaza in front of the entrance to the museum galleries.

If you have questions, please write < news@naturekenya.org > or phone 0780-149200.

The **Sunday Birdwatch** will start again on 21st March - after one year. We are planning to visit a site north of Nairobi and meet at the site. If you would like to join this outing, please write to <news@naturekenya.org > or phone 0780-149200

Bird ringing at Nairobi National Museum grounds is ongoing. Ringing (bird banding) is carried out weekly on Tuesdays from 7:30-10:30 in the morning, organized by Titus Imboma. Ringers and those who want to observe and learn meet at Nairobi National Museums at the Peace Park near the Botanical Gardens. Ringers are requested observe Covid-19 protocols. It is advisable to confirm on Monday as plans can change: <Imbomati911@gmail.com > Phone: 0721-649452.

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:

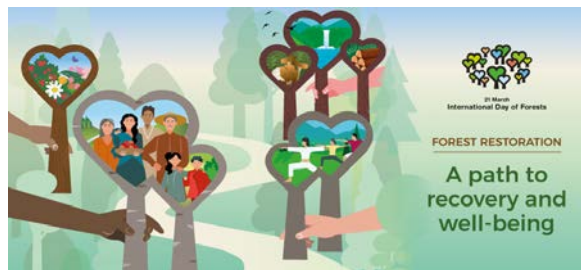
Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com > / 0733-980540
or Kelvin Mazera <klvnrua@yahoo.com > / 0720-928783

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 >

Please send your records to:

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

If you have questions re KBM, write to <kenyabirdmap@naturekenya.org >



EANHS/NMK Library Update

The joint library for Nature Kenya and National Museums of Kenya is open and welcomes all members of Nature Kenya to use its premises. Social distancing and other COVID-19 guidelines are adhered to. Currently on display is an information exhibition on 'Birds of Mount Kenya'. Do pass by and have a look at the exhibition and also see what other rich virtual and physical information resources we have on birds and other topics. You are also very welcome to make purchases of these publications: (1) Kenya Birding magazine at Ksh.400 and; (2) Checklist of the Birds of Kenya at Ksh. 200 to enrich your personal collections. Members may also borrow books for in depth referral at affordable cost. We look forward to welcoming you to the library.



Yes! Start my NatureKenya membership

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MEMBERSHIP TYPES		Ksh Per Year
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Student		1,200
Schools, Clubs		1,500
Corporates		20,000 -30,000



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- Enter account number (put your lapsed membership number or write new member)
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For details on associated groups such as Youth Committee, Succulenta, and Friends of Nairobi Arboretum, City Park or Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, contact office@naturekenya.org