

A Common Dwarf Mongoose and screen shots of the Makenya mobile app. PHOTOS: LORENZO BARELLI AND GOOGLE PLAY

## Mobile App to boost mammal monitoring in Kenya

BY CAROLINE CHEBET

The Mammal Committee of Nature Kenya and the National Museums of Kenya have partnered with Spotteron Citizen Science to develop a mobile app to monitor mammals in Kenya.

The mobile app, known as Mammal Atlas Kenya (Makenya), is currently available on Google Play and Spotteron (www.spotteron.net). Spotteron is a web-based platform that hosts citizen science, environment protection and volunteer monitoring apps.

Makenya seeks to involve naturalists in collecting scientific data to map the distribution of over 390 mammal species. Data collected will then inform the development of a distribution map for mammals in Kenya.

“The app allows users to record mammal sightings using their mobile phones. It captures locations where the mammals were recorded. The captured data is then used to populate distribution maps,” Simon Musila, Head of Mammalogy section of the National Museums of Kenya said.

The availability of the Makenya app also marks the incorporation of technology in mammal conservation efforts. Citizens can

now be actively involved in the monitoring of Kenyan mammals. Users are encouraged to share sightings of common and rare mammals.

“There are many mammal species in Kenya and the distribution of some of them is not known. This app will help experts consolidate shared information into a single database for an informed distribution map,” Musila said.

Wildlife enthusiasts can download and install the app on their Android or Apple IOS mobile devices for free. Once installed, they can now start contributing to monitoring of mammals across Kenya’s extensive network of protected and unprotected areas, including national parks, game reserves and forests.

The app allows users to record GPS coordinates of the area they spotted a particular mammal and even share pictures. Makenya users can utilise the app anywhere; on land, in water, and even underground as long as they have a stable cellular network connection. The crowd-sourced data captured by Makenya will also be used to monitor mammal species distribution within their known ranges.

## 111<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**DATE:** Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
**TIME:** 10:00 AM - Noon  
**VIA:** Zoom virtual meeting

### The Agenda

- Minutes of the 110<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting
- Matters arising from the Minutes
- Chairman’s Report
- Honorary Treasurer’s Report
- Appointment of Auditor
- 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.

The Executive Committee proposes a **Constitutional amendment to remove the NAMES of branches.**

Amend article XVI of the EANHS Constitution to DELETE (d) in below.

### XVI. BRANCHES

Branches of the Society may be formed with the approval of the Committee and Registrar of Societies and they will adopt the same Constitution as that of the headquarters with the following exceptions:

- The aims and objects will not include the formation of branches
  - Amendments to the Constitution can only be made by the headquarters of the Society in accordance with the provisions of Rule XX
  - The provisions of Rule XXI shall apply to branches but, in addition, branches will not be dissolved without consultation with their headquarters.
  - The branches formed in member countries of the East African Community shall bear the following names;
    - “Nature Kenya” in respect of the Kenya Branch of the Society.
    - “Nature Uganda” in respect of the Uganda Branch of the Society.
    - “Nature Tanzania” in respect of the Tanzania Branch of the Society.
- 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](mailto:nkmembership@naturekenya.org)
  - Report by Committees, Projects, Library and Journal

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

## Please take care!

We hope our members remain safe and well while the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified. The Kenya Government has given directives to help reduce the spread, and we are following the guidelines. 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.

1. The 111th EANHNS Annual General Meeting will be held virtually on 19th May 2021 from 10 a.m. by Zoom.
2. The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks and Sunday Birdwatch have been postponed again. Updates will be published in the May Nature Net
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 scheduled for 16th April 2021 has been postponed until further notice. For further information please contact Gloria Waswa, Membership and Marketing Manager at [naturekenya.org](mailto:naturekenya.org) or telephone 0726 134029.
5. Members will continue to receive an electronic version of the Nature Net
6. The EANHNS/NMK Library is closed while the Museum undertakes fumigation, to re-open on 12th April 2021. Museum galleries and sites are open to the public under Ministry of Health guidelines (as at 29th March 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](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

## KYELENI, the village less travelled

BY JACINTA NJERI

Within Kilimambogo lies Kyeleni, an unexplored agricultural village. On 20th February 2021, the Nature Kenya Youth Committee embarked on a two-day mission to survey the biodiversity in this area. (Kilimambogo is also known as Ol Doinyo Sabuk.)

Our journey to the village took longer than expected. Despite being exhausted from the three-hour drive, the team eagerly anticipated its visit, unsure of what to expect. Mr Francis, our contact person, greeted us by the roadside and directed us to the camping area, which would be our home for the next 24 hours.

Upon arriving at the campsite, the team was divided into groups to ensure cooking was completed early, to allow more time for the evening survey. The groups were: team Ugali (funny how energetic the members of this group were), team Stew (the best cooks in the group), team Firewood (in charge of lighting the fire), and team AOB (in-charge of cleaning the cooking pots after meals).

Francis gave some members of the group a tour of his farm as lunch was being prepared. In the middle of his farm, not far from the camping area, was the main attraction – a mango tree. You can only imagine the excitement of the hungry group upon seeing this tree. Francis allowed them to pick some mangoes. He even went out of his way to harvest some maize for the team to roast before lunch.

You would be mistaken to imagine that after feasting on mangoes and roasted maize, only a few people would show up for lunch. There wasn't a grain of rice nor a drop of soup left in the pots!

We converged at around 5 p.m. and went through some of the species present in the area, survey methods, and identification tools (iNaturalist, Makenya, and guide books) for use. We set out on our first survey, hoping to come across some interesting species.

Three hours into the search, we had spotted a few birds. Some of the birds had been identified by their calls. Darkness fell fast, and we retreated to the camping area.

After dinner, we gathered around a fire. The team was still going strong and decided to play a few games before calling it a night.

The following morning was chilly and quiet, with only the sweet melodies of birds heard. We started birding at 6 a.m. The bird experts in the group assisted the rest of the team with identification through calls. As the sun steadily rose higher into the sky, more birds became visible, making it easier to identify them.

Although no other species besides birds had been spotted hours into the survey, the herd and mammal lovers remained optimistic.

The day grew hotter, and we began to meet local residents who were puzzled as to why such a large group was in their village early in the morning. Francis explained that visitors from outside, particularly those interested in conducting research, were rare.

As we approached the foot of Mt. Kilimambogo, the team heard calls of excitement from within. "Come see a snake," someone called. The snake enthusiast hurriedly rushed to the scene to catch a glimpse of the snake while others moved further away. To their amazement, it was a Cape Wolf Snake. Unfortunately, it was dead. A few meters away, the group came across another dead one: an Olive Snake.

The two snake sightings were the team's highest moments. This energized us for the rest of the hike to the base of the mountain.

This survey would not have been successful without the continued support of Nature Kenya. In total, we recorded 32 bird species, two amphibians, and two snakes, with the prominent plant species being Euphorbia, Croton trees, and Sisal. 🐸



Team members at the foot of Mt. Kilimambogo. PHOTO: HEYBURN MOOGI

For updates visit  
[www.naturekenya.org](http://www.naturekenya.org)

### EDITORIAL TEAM

Fleur Ng'weno, Gloria Waswa, Richard Kipngeno and John Mwacharo

### LAYOUT

John Mwacharo

### FRONT BANNER

Lorenzo Barelli



For contributions, advertising and subscriptions, contact us by:

Post: P. O. Box 44486 GPO, Nairobi

Telephone: 020 3537568/0780149200/0751624312/ 0771343138

Email: [office@naturekenya.org](mailto:office@naturekenya.org)

Printed with support from:



## Nest building at LORESHO



Spectacled Weavers. PHOTOS: PETER USHER



## April Skies

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

This column points out the brightest stars and planets and most distinctive constellations in the early evening and predawn skies – suitable for times under curfew. You will see many more stars on a clear night in a dark location away from urban lights. It's safe to use binoculars to look at the moon, planets and stars, but DON'T look at the sun.

There are many good websites that provide more in-depth information. At [earthsky.org](http://earthsky.org) you can subscribe to a free daily e-mail newsletter. Remember that most websites target viewers in the North or South; here near the equator, the planets and constellations will appear in a slightly different position.

### April Stars

Sirius, the night's brightest star, is high in the southwest, and Canopus, second brightest, below it in the south. Sirius is called the Dog Star – imagine Sirius as the dog's eye, and look for bright stars forming a paw below, and a paw and tail to the east (left). The Little Dog – the bright star Procyon – is high overhead.

The constellation Orion – Hunter or Warrior – walks towards the west. North of Orion is the reddish star Aldebaran, the fiery eye of Taurus the Bull. The reddish planet Mars, now rather faint, is slightly further north. In the first half of April, Mars seems to be near the bright star Elnath. Elnath is known as the northern horn of the Bull, and also as part of the pentagon-shaped constellation Auriga. The crescent moon is near Aldebaran and the Pleiades or Seven Sisters star cluster on April 15, and near Mars on the 17th.

High in the northwest, two sets of two stars form the constellation

Gemini, the Twins. High in the northeast, the bright star Regulus is at the heart of the constellation Leo the lion. The waxing moon is near the star Pollux in Gemini on the 19th, and near Regulus on April 22.

Two iconic constellations rise in the east on April evenings. The Plough or Big Dipper is low in the northeast. Crux, the Southern Cross, is low in the southeast. At month's end this year, two planets – brilliant Venus and tiny Mercury – may be glimpsed in the glare of the sunset, low in the west.

### Morning Sky

The planet Jupiter is a brilliant light in the eastern sky before sunrise. Saturn, less bright, is high in the east. With binoculars on a clear, dark night, you may see up to four of Jupiter's moons as bright dots on each side of the planet.

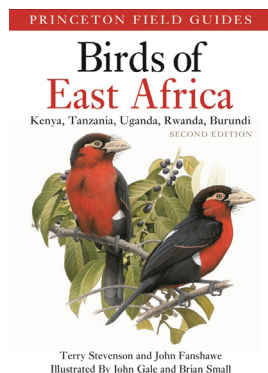
The constellation of the Scorpion crawls towards the west. The waning moon is near the star Antares, the Scorpion's fiery eye, on April 2 and 29; near Saturn on April 6 and near Jupiter on the 7th.

### Moon, April 2021

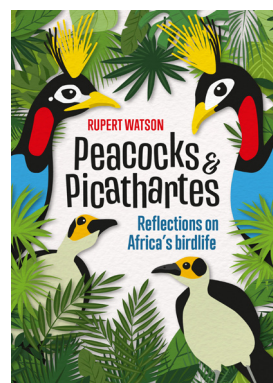
April 4 – last quarter. April 12 – new moon. April 20 – first quarter. April 27 – full moon. The moon's orbit brings it a little closer to Earth this month, so the full moon is a 'supermoon' – looking slightly larger and brighter than usual.

The phases of the moon still influence major religious holidays. The Christian holy day of Easter (April 4 this year) falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Equinox (March 20 this year). The Muslim holy month of Ramadhan starts once the new moon is sighted (on April 12 or 13 this year), and lasts until the next new moon is sighted (in May). 🌑

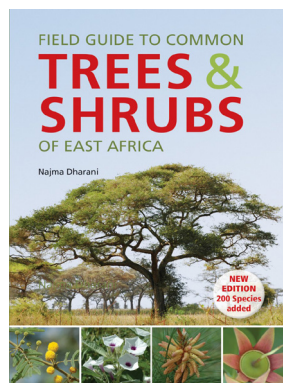
**BOOKS AVAILABLE** at Nature Kenya Shop  
to buy visit <https://www.naturekenya.org/shop/>



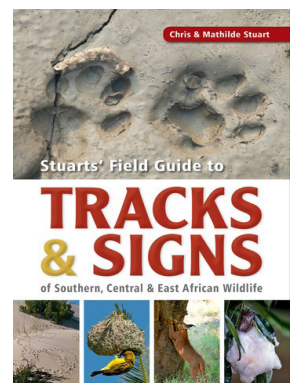
Ksh. 5,100



Ksh. 1,700



Ksh. 3,500



Ksh. 3,500

## Birding Updates

**Wednesday Morning Birdwalks** and the Sunday Birdwatch are suspended again, following Covid-19 guidelines for the five counties in the red zone. In April we encourage all birders to visit nearby green spaces and be alert for birds migrating north to their breeding grounds in Europe or Asia. During the April migration birds may appear in unexpected habitats. At the coast, look out for migratory birds arriving from southern Africa.

Please 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)>

The next **Global Big Day** of bird-watching will be 8 May 2021. If you would like to take part, please send your name and contacts to [birds@naturekenya.org](mailto:birds@naturekenya.org) or phone 0780-149200.

Confirm with Titus Imboma <[Imbomati911@gmail.com](mailto:Imbomati911@gmail.com)> Phone 0721-649452 regarding **Bird ringing at Nairobi National Museum** grounds.

**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 Kelvin Mazera <[klvnrua@yahoo.com](mailto:klvnrua@yahoo.com)> / 0720-928783

Stay updated with the birding scene in Kenya by signing in to the new **Kenyabirdsnet** platform on Google Groups at: <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/kenyabirdsnet>

After signing in you will be able to post your records through the following email address:  
[kenyabirdsnet@googlegroups.com](mailto:kenyabirdsnet@googlegroups.com)

### Online birding:

- Wings Over Kenya Facebook page
- Ndege Wetu (blog series on the birds of Kenya) <<http://www.shotsbyshema.com/category/ndege-wetu/>>
- "The Safari Naturalist" on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCajjLtyL9G6mJ20Ajw1RLxA>
- "The Safari Naturalist" blog website: <https://www.thesafarinaturalist.com/virtual-birding-tours/>



Download free QR Readers from the web and scan this QR (Quick Response) code with your smart phone for pictures and more stories.

## JOURNAL OF EAST AFRICAN NATURAL HISTORY

The latest issue of the Journal of East African Natural History (JEANH) is now available online.

In Volume 109 Part 2 (2020), Gunda *et al.*, report on how **Distance from the Tourist Trail and Daylight Condition Affect the Abundance of Mwanza Flat-Headed Rock Agama (*Agama mwanzae*)** in Saanane National Park, Tanzania  
<https://bioone.org/journals/journal-of-east-african-natural-history/volume-109/issue-2/028.109.0201/Distance-from-the-Tourist-Trail-and-Daylight-Condition-Affect-the/10.2982/028.109.0201.short>

Struhsaker discusses the **Growth Rates in the Giant Rosette Plants *Dendrosenecio adnivalis* and *Lobelia wollastonii*** on the Ruwenzori Mountains, Uganda  
<https://bioone.org/journals/journal-of-east-african-natural-history/volume-109/issue-2/028.109.0202/Growth-Rates-in-the-Giant-Rosette-Plants-Dendrosenecio-adnivalis-and/10.2982/028.109.0202.short>

Ann Robertson provided an obituary for Ann Birnie, who sadly passed away on 8 November 2020.

<https://bioone.org/journals/journal-of-east-african-natural-history/volume-109/issue-2/028.109.0203/Ann-Birnie-In-Memoriam/10.2982/028.109.0203.short>

The JEANH is available via BioOne and African Journals Online.

## REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS BIOLOGY COURSE



**COST KSH 15,000**

NON-REFUNDABLE EARLY BOOKING OF KSH 5,000 ALLOWED

**17<sup>TH</sup> - 21<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2021**

**ONLY 20 SPOTS AVAILABLE**

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

For registration and inquiries call  
**+254 (0) 20 3637568, +254 (0) 780 149200, +254 (0) 771343138**  
or send an email to [office@naturekenya.org](mailto:office@naturekenya.org)

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

## Yes! Start my NatureKenya membership

Surname \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Ms/Mr/Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel. \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP TYPES	
Ksh Per Year	
Full	2,000
Sponsor	6,000
Family	2,800
Student	1,200
Schools, Clubs	1,500
Corporates	20,000 -30,000



### JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

- Select 'Lipa na Mpesa'
- Select 'Pay Bill'
- Enter business number **100300**
- Enter account number (**put your lapsed membership number or write new member**)
- Enter the amount, enter your PIN
- Confirm details & press OK

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](mailto:office@naturekenya.org)